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THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

AND

THE GERMANIC SETTING

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I, the undersigned, hereby state that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text or notes of the thesis.

*Anne Hansen*

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## SUMMARY

The present thesis is a study of hitherto neglected aspects of the work of the English poet and dramatist Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849). His major work, Death's Jest Book, was written in Germany; the adult years of his life were spent in this country and in Switzerland, and the literature and thought of the German writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries influenced the treatment and the plot of Death's Jest Book.

Beddoes received little or no recognition in his lifetime and not all the facts about his years on the Continent have yet been discovered. The Introduction therefore is devoted to establishing the sources for biographical and textual matters.

Part One is biographical: a discussion of the life of the poet, his early works, and of the origin of the problems which led him to begin the writing of Death's Jest Book, a play whose development through twenty years of writing and revision is inseparable from that of its author. His later political career and suicide are treated in less detail.

Part Two is devoted to a new interpretation of Death's Jest Book in terms of four main themes. The first two sections, A and B, discuss the source of the plot, its connections with the English revenge drama, and the later revisions of the play which are an index of the changes in the poet's view of life. Section C

concerns the themes of folly, revenge and power and liberty, whose development is inextricable from the plot, and the theme of death, associated with the motif of the Dance of Death, is treated separately from page 86 onwards.

Part Three attempts to evaluate the nature and extent of the German influence in the play in the four categories named in the Contents. The first discusses the general concept of irony, demonstrates Beddoes' use of "dramatic Irony, and defines the German concept of Romantic Irony, derived by Beddoes from three sources and adapted to the demands of his play. The summary of this section endeavours to answer some of the questions posed by Part Two C's discussion of the play, mainly that of its unity or lack of it. Three B discusses the influence of Novalis's theory of Magic Idealism on two passages of the play and associated matters; Three C is concerned with specific sections of the play which may or may not have been influenced by the works of German writers, mainly Goethe, Schiller and Tieck, and endeavours to establish the general nature of this influence; Three D concerns the c version of Act 1 of the play and its relation to the German chronicle form, concluding with a word on linguistic ~~existence~~ influence to be detected in the language of the play.

The Conclusion attempts to sum up the findings of the preceding two sections and relates Beddoes' work to the more general problems of the Romantic movement as a perspective of judgment.

## INTRODUCTION

Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803 - 1849) is a poet whose comparative obscurity is owed, not to a lack of poetic insight, but to a combination of circumstances which might have consigned him to oblivion altogether but for the efforts of friends and admirers to bring his name and works before the public. Not unjustifiably he has been likened to Rimbaud: his talents came to early flower, and in 1822, at the age of nineteen, he published a play which received critical acclaim. This was The Brides' Tragedy. In a dramatically barren age it was seen as the first product of a new genius, but a brilliant future was not to be. Beddoes departed for Germany to study medicine and published nothing further in England. He did not give up literary pursuits however. He studied German literature and all the allied philosophy and theory of the German Romantic period and spent much time in the composition of the monumental Death's Jest Book, a drama which for various reasons was never completed. His mature work comprises very little, mostly lyric poetry which he incorporated into Death's Jest Book and wrote whenever inspiration diverted him from the political causes he espoused in the last two decades of his life.

In time, Beddoes' work falls into the period after

the death of Keats and Shelley; literary historians place him beside Darley and Hood. In spirit, it contains a little of the Jacobean, of the Gothic school, of the grotesque and fanciful which is associated with certain German writers, notably Tieck, and much besides, transmuted into pure Beddoes by the particular quality and preoccupations of his enquiring mind. He wrote in virtual isolation and from the beginning struggled with an inner problem which is the subject of all his work and the reason for many of its deficiencies. Cast in the objective dramatic form yet patently subjective, his writing traces the progress of his struggle and underlines the tragic ambivalence of the victory which ultimately destroyed him. There is little doubt that Beddoes died a suicide, though the actual circumstances of his death are obscure.

His political activities earn him a minor position in the history of the period; his literary activities are only known through the interest of a few friends in England, the chief of them Thomas Forbes Kelsall, addressee of most of Beddoes' infrequent letters. By him was preserved the work Beddoes himself underrated, and which he, Kelsall, perhaps overrated.

We approach Beddoes' work through a mass of misunderstanding and conjecture which falsifies a great deal that has been written about the poet and his creations, and in this case they are inseparable. It is necessary, therefore, to give a brief outline of the textual and biographical sources before attempting any critical analysis of Beddoes' work.

The will found by Beddoes' deathbed in the hospital at Basle appointed as literary executor his friend Thomas Forbes Kelsall, a solicitor. Thus into Kelsall's hands passed a mass of unedited manuscripts, comprising Death's Jest Book in three versions, lyrics, poetic fragments and some prose tales with verses. Beddoes' letters had included copies of a few poems, and he had submitted an early copy of Death's Jest Book to Kelsall twenty years before in an unsuccessful attempt to gain publication. Now Kelsall wished to edit and publish these manuscripts, but the circumstances of Beddoes' death, which were not made public for forty years, and the irregular nature of his life and beliefs, caused his immediate family to oppose publication of the manuscripts they viewed with suspicion. In 1850, however, an anonymous version of Death's Jest Book with certain cuts and revisions<sup>1</sup> appeared, followed by a selection of other poems in 1851, this time in the poet's name. Henry Beddoes, the poet's younger brother, had in the meantime read Death's Jest Book and found no cause for alarm.

In 1858 Beddoes' cousin Zoe King visited Switzerland and met several people who had known the poet in his last months. These included the physicians who had attended him, his friend Degen, and a waiter at the hotel where he had lodged. Ten years after his death the fact of Beddoes' suicide by poison became known to his closest friends as distinct from his immediate family, yet it continued to be a closely guarded secret. There had, of course, been speculation. Revell Phillips believed the attitude of Henry Beddoes indicated insanity or

suicide, though the poet's radicalism and irregular life was a credible reason for it.

In 1867 Kelsall sent the manuscripts to Robert Browning who was to give an opinion on the unpublished sections. No complete edition of Beddoes' work had yet appeared; critical writing on Beddoes was limited to reviews of his books and Kelsall's own memoir, to which later biographers are greatly indebted.<sup>2</sup> This was included in his own edition. Kelsall had been at pains to collect or copy all Beddoes' writings, the letters he had received and many from other hands which directly concerned the poet's life and work.<sup>3</sup> The fate of these manuscripts is unknown beyond a certain point. The famous box containing them, the "Browning Box", remained in Italy with Browning's son and disappeared after the latter's death. The manuscripts had been bequeathed to Browning by Kelsall, and Mrs. Kelsall accompanied them with the startling information of Beddoes' suicide. This caused Browning to defer the task of editing the works, though finally he enlisted the aid of Gosse who produced the long awaited edition. The version of Death's Jest Book was that of Kelsall's 1850 text, and the variorum texts we possess today are owed to copies made by Kelsall and a later admirer, James Dykes Campbell, who copied almost all in the box. One notable exception is the collection of prose tales intended for the volume The Ivory Gate: only fragmentary passages were deemed worthy of preservation.

Gosse's two volume edition of the works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes appeared<sup>4</sup> in 1890 and 1894, followed by a second edition in 1928. In 1907 Ramsay Colles edited

the works for the Muses Library series. Only at this late date, forty years and more after the poet's death, did his writing become accessible to the public in a more or less complete form with biographical accounts, though these were not satisfactory. The sources of knowledge of Beddoes' life in Germany were almost entirely restricted to his own letters and what his family and friends learnt after his death; added to these were the inaccuracies perpetrated by Gosse and generally accepted during the next forty years.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the age which has almost unanimously recognised the greatness of John Donne and the German Baroque poets was to a lesser degree best suited to appreciate the mind and art of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, repellent and incomprehensible as much of his writing seemed to those contemporaries who knew it.<sup>6</sup> Critical analysis, supposed to be superficial and for the most part uncritical reviews, was at last possible, though few full length studies have appeared.

The first two were both the work of German critics, Alwin Feller's in 1914 and Grete Moldauer's in 1924. Neither attempts a comparative study of Beddoes and their own national literature, though Moldauer's work contains references to Romantic Irony. The first comparative study, an article entitled Beddoes and the Continental Romanticists by Frederick Pierce (1927), has strange omissions and startling conclusions. In 1928 appeared Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Eccentric and Poet, by an American, Royall H. Snow, which touches on a great many important issues while being too short to be satisfactory.

In 1935 what may be considered the definitive work on Beddoes was finally produced by H.W.Donner, whose services to the poet rank second only to Kelsall's. Three books in all appeared: a complete edition of the works with copious and invaluable notes, owing something to the German researches of C.A.Weber who authenticated the political poetry and speeches published anonymously or over the initial B. in the German and Swiss press<sup>8</sup>; a critical biography containing much new information; and, collected under the title The Browning Box, letters written to and about Beddoes prior to 1890, with valuable information about the poet and his manuscripts. As a result of these books and Weber's much that had been obscure or unknown was clarified. The variorum texts of Death's Jest Book, called by Donner  $\alpha$   $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  are now available. The last contains only an expanded Act 1, part of a larger revision never completed.

These studies form at once an end point and a basis on which to proceed to a more detailed analysis of aspects of Beddoes' work, particularly of his contact with German literature which began before he left England. There has been no comprehensive evaluation of its influence in his work after 1825, nor of the affinities he felt for German thought as a result of his own preoccupations; and this in spite of the concrete evidence of his own reading taken in conjunction with the comments made in letters at the time when his beliefs were undergoing changes of a deep and potentially destructive nature. The present study is written in an attempt to examine Beddoes the poet of Death and ~~star~~ determine the nature of these connections and their



significance: to recreate the man and trace the impulses that led him to write as he did a series of unfinished dramas of which the last, Death's Jest Book, became through a combination of circumstances his life's work and the mirror of his development.

### Notes

- 1 The cuts include many of the prose passages, particularly those concerning Mandrake; Act 11 scene 1; the bawdy songs of 1, iv, c version not published by any early editor. The revisions include the placement of "As sudden thunder" at the end of 1V, ii, where it is obviously out of place, despite the use of the variant of the penultimate line, "we buried, dead and slain" found in the letter to Kelsall of May 16 1837.
- 2 Among other things he obtained a memoir of Beddoes as a schoolboy from his fag, C.D. Bevan. This illuminating and often quoted document helps to fill in a sparsely documented period. Most of the information about Beddoes as a boy is more anecdotal than useful.
- 3 See p.6 below. A great many critics, Gosse in particular, would have done well to read closely Zoe King's letter of August 1858 in which she describes her visit to Degen. It contradicts Gosse's account of the relationship and falsifies the basic assumptions of such writers as John Heath Stubbs and Hiram Kellogg Johnston - see bibliography.
- 4 The edition was set up by Jack Lindsey, who was responsible for the rather arty format and the Holbein illustrations.
- 5 Gosse states that Beddoes hired a theatre to

present his friend Degen as Hotspur in Henry IV as the result of a homosexual infatuation. In actual fact Beddoes did hire a theatre to present this play: in 1838. He himself played Hotspur, but he seems to have been inspired in the first place by the discovery of an immensely fat German whom he further fattened up and presented as Falstaff. The rest of the cast were professionals. (See Donner, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, the Making of a Poet, p.312) This is a characteristically Beddoesian joke, and requires no tenuous justification, as it is fact, not surmise.

- 6 Kelsall's attitude to the passages he omitted and others were shared by other friends. A comprehensive critical view explains and incorporates them more than adequately, but such was not possible at the time.
- 7 He makes no reference to Tieck, to whom the letters refer frequently; if he excludes this writer on the basis of his affiliations with the Aufklärung, it is difficult to justify the inclusion of Goethe in his list of writers.
- 8 Bristols Bedeutung für die englische Romantik und die deutsch-englische Beziehungen (Halle Saale, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1935), pp.211 ff.

c Not all the facts about Beddoes have yet come to light: two collections of Mrs. Beddoes' letters have been discovered in the last fifteen years and have upset accepted attitudes. Professor Donner has also produced a recent article (1962 - see bibliog.), which contributes a few new points to the study of Beddoes, and some new German letters have also appeared. There is no reason to believe that this is the end of such discoveries.

N.B. The three variorum texts will henceforward be known for reasons of convenience by the English letters a, b and c. Where a and b are identical, the composite term ab will be used.

## Part One

### THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

#### A. 1803 - 1825: England

Heredity and environment: these are the key-words of the rational-scientific approach of a pre-Freudian age to the examination of social phenomena. In the case of Thomas Lovell Beddoes it is instructive to apply these criteria to his early years and trace the extent to which each contributed to the final product, the poet, and his writings.

Beddoes was the second of four children<sup>1</sup> of a marriage between Dr. Thomas Beddoes, famous in his lifetime as a man of science, a thinker and a rationalist, and Anna Edgeworth, daughter of the noted rationalist and educator Richard Lovell Edgeworth and sister of the novelist Maria. Biographers<sup>2</sup> have noted the amazing similarities between the careers of father and son which are not to be discounted on the grounds that the poet's father died in December 1808, Beddoes being five and a half years old at the time.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas Beddoes distinguished himself among his European contemporaries for the power and originality of his ideas. A medical graduate of London and Edinburgh, he was a reader in chemistry at Oxford from 1786 to 1792. While there he made a plea to the Bodleian library for

the inclusion of German works of medicine, law and philosophy; he was among the first in England to know and appreciate the works of Kant, and Kant in turn was acquainted with the work of Dr. Beddoes.<sup>4</sup> His career at Oxford came to an end as a result of too great a zeal for the French Revolution. Shortly afterwards he married and settled in Bristol, taking part in political life and practising medicine. Two of his friends were Coleridge and Southey; Dr. Beddoes too wrote poetry, and a mind akin to his son's found the Elizabethan mode congenial. His works survive today. They have none of the sense of emotional necessity to be found in his son's poetry.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Beddoes was first and foremost a rationalist and this aspect underlies the theories and practices for which he became known as an eccentric.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Lovell Beddoes was born on June 30th 1803 at Clifton, near Bristol. From the highest of motives, Dr. Beddoes endeavoured to put into practice in the upbringing of his children enlightened and humanistic ideas of education gleaned from Rousseau and Montessori. Their one-sidedness may throw doubt on his wisdom, but his sincerity is unquestionable. In an age that devoured Gothic tales of wonder and regarded Germany as the home of Lenore, Horrid Mysteries and the dramas of Rotzebue<sup>7</sup>, he banned the reading of fairytales and similar imaginative nonsense and instead approached the facts of life intellectually. He appreciated the difficulties of imparting to the young a proper attitude to sex and the human body and devised a method which, he considered, would inculcate a proper respect for the seriousness and naturalness of such matters. This, in fact, was to dissect for the edification of his children the dead

bodies of lower animals, exposing their organs for inspection. Critics assume almost unanimously that this made an impression on the young Thomas, and clearly the memory of this early experience returned to him on later occasions in the form of poetic impulse<sup>8</sup> and in less tangible ways. There was an anti-rationalistic streak in Thomas Lovell Beddoes, inherited perhaps from his imaginative and unstable mother.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately the only psychiatric study of the poet is marred by its insistence on the clinical aspect of Beddoes as an isolated "specimen", and is a monument to the futility and indeed the dangers of such an approach.<sup>10</sup>

Beddoes was educated like his father at Charterhouse school<sup>11</sup> where he came into contact with imaginative literature from the Greeks and Shakespeare to the works of living writers. He showed interest in the drama and began to write during this period, producing prolifically and precociously.

Some of his writing from this period survives, and the memoir written by Charles Dacres Bevan, his fag, mentions at least one lost work.<sup>12</sup> His sole ~~surviving~~ surviving prose work, letters and fragments apart, dates from his schooldays. This is Scaroni, in which it is difficult to distinguish what is Beddoes and what belongs to the traditional trappings of the tale of terror. We find the background of the Crusades, the Italianate names, tales within the tale, the "mysterious cave" of the sub-title, foetid and infested, burlesque humour, and a pact between two sisters <sup>like</sup> ~~like~~ that of Wolfram and Melferic in Death's Jest Book. This last is not the only element that survives and persists.

The same ingredients are blended in the first published work of Beddoes, The Improvisatore, three verse tales within a loose framework. In fact the preoccupation with death and its more horrible accoutrements is taken to be an expression of Beddoes' neurotic and possibly insane mind, but this assumption oversimplifies the problem. Undoubtedly the beginnings were innocent enough.<sup>13</sup>

Scaroni (unpublished) and The Improvisatore (written 1819, published 1821) were not written in a vacuum. They were two early efforts of an impressionable adolescent in contact with the popular literature of his day and extremely susceptible to literary example. There is no doubt that Beddoes favoured the morbid but this does not represent the total extant work of the first period, nor is it at variance with certain types of literary fashion. The long unfinished poem Alfarabi or The World Maker contains motifs Beddoes later developed: the vision of chaos from which Alfarabi creates a world specifically contrasted to the earth, the theme of ambition, and an aerial flight.<sup>14</sup> It is significant to note that when Alfarabi sees in his flight visions of evil they are

The blood choked curse of him who dies in bed  
By torchlight, with a dagger in his heart;  
The parricidal and incestuous laugh;  
And the last cries of those whom devils hale  
Quick into hell.

(11. 91-5)

This passage would seem to be influenced by the horrors of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas as distinct from the more "modern" Gothic type of the other two works.<sup>15</sup>

As a contrast, the contents of the short poems such as "A New Born Star", "The Comet" and the Quatorzains printed with The Improvisatore seem to indicate experimentation with other models which he later discarded or modified to suit his predominant mode.

Donner states that "From the very beginning Beddoes' muse seems to be wedded to a corpse and loving it"<sup>16</sup>, yet in the early stages he seems only to have engaged in a flirtation which gradually revealed its insidious nature. The horrors he depicted in his most notorious works, those regarded by some as characteristic, were not his own inventions. It has been suggested<sup>17</sup>, apparently correctly, that his early familiarity with the dismembered animal body combined with his fanciful poetic imagination caused him to write of death in a manner unacceptable to others. The most outstanding example comes from this youthful period: the description of the battlefield in the opening stanza of Leopold. It seems feasible that in adopting the tale of terror as a model he stimulated his mind to recall early memories which may have receded into the subconscious mind after his father's death and the cessation of the demonstrations, though, as will be seen, it was only after his mother's death that the most destructive ideas began to emerge.

The bones and snakes (Johnston's "phallic objects") which he depicted within his charnel houses and caverns were equally part of tradition, and Beddoes' choice of images does not necessarily suggest any subjective involvement. In this earliest period also he gives examples of his inability to depict love scenes between living beings, a fault which persists. Rodolph, in

the second fytte of The Improvisatore embraces the queen of beauty and finds himself holding a skull in a charnel house.<sup>18</sup> This may be merely the expedient device of a young man who had had little experience of women and a strange home life.<sup>19</sup> Physical love was an unknown quantity and he strove with increasing strictness in his writing to negate any tendency to sentiment. An examination of the further development of the same inter-related love-death theme in The Brides' Tragedy in the next period may be illuminating.

To sum up the earliest works of Beddoes it may be said that we find already the first expression of motifs which were to be developed in his later work: the fascinated dalliance with thoughts of death and horror, the implicit admiration for the power of the mind as expressed in Alfarabi, and the ambivalent attitude to love as natural yet to be thwarted by death or, perhaps, as courting death in its physical aspects. Implicit also in the early poems is a negation of the fruitful aspects of life, friendship and love, which Beddoes' own confessed shyness allowed to become obsessive in later years,

The Brides' Tragedy is his next significant work, the only play to be published in his lifetime.

In April 1820 Beddoes entered Pembroke College at Oxford, his father's old college, and in the following March The Improvisatore and other poems was published. Beddoes soon regretted this step and destroyed all the copies he could lay his hands on, leaving his friends with the disembowelled covers and posterity with some five or six of the original edition. However new in-



spiration soon came to him.

In the copy of the Oxford University and City Herald of March 24th 1821 containing a review of his new publication appeared a ballad entitled "Lucy" and a memoir of local interest. Both tell the story of Lucy, the beautiful daughter of a manciple of the university, who is secretly wooed and subsequently married by an undergraduate. When the vacation comes he leaves the university and moves among those of his own social standing. Here he comes to the notice of a nobleman and his daughter. Ambition seizes him and he foresees a brilliant future, to which the only bar is his secret wife. He returns to Oxford at night and murders Lucy. This done, he marries the noblewoman, but no earthly retribution follows and the story emerges on his deathbed where the author of the ballad allegedly receives the confession.<sup>20</sup>

This was promising material for a tragedy though Beddoes proceeded to create the most elaborate plot round the basic story.<sup>21</sup> Much he changed. The young man becomes Hesperus, his unfortunate brides are Floribel and Olivia. The names and setting alike attest to the "Illyrian" ~~existing~~ tradition of the Elizabethan and Jacobean play; this was the form Beddoes' inclination led him to adopt. Hesperus's crime is revealed almost instantaneously for the purpose of drama, though a hint of this possibility is also contained in the memoir.

The most interesting change is in Hesperus's motivation. Whereas the original figure had been inspired by ambition, Hesperus is at the mercy of two forces: external pressure from his father who is in debt to

Clivia's brother, and his own jealousy of Floribel which, though introduced as early as l i 29 seems almost as neurotic as that of the narrator of Browning's My Last Duchess. Here Beddoes prefers the more common themes of filial duty and jealousy to the less sympathetic one of ambition, yet in Death's Jest Book he depicts a character driven by this very force, the jester Isbrand, who overshadows every other figure in the power of his portrayal. Yet the virtually dehumanised figure of Isbrand, even in an early version, would have distorted the whole conception of The Brides' Tragedy, and Beddoes had not then attained to the despair which produced him. It ~~is~~ is probable also that Beddoes did not understand the worldly type of ambition of the original of Hesperus; his writings and his own chosen way of life prove as much.

Hesperus is a weak character by Elizabethan standards. He is crippled in his portrayal as a tragic criminal by the Romantic convention which did not allow the murderers of the "Elizabethan Revival" to act in full consciousness of their deed; there is always a suggestion of temporary madness. Such an explanation is given by Hesperus's father, ll iv 19-28.<sup>22</sup> In fact he has not the substance necessary to the hero of a tragedy. His longer speeches like those of Act ll scene iv which concludes as a long soliloquy leaning heavily on the dagger scene from Macbeth<sup>23</sup> express a passion which ill accords with his inability to assume responsibility for his actions and with the melancholic nature which makes him undergo an unnecessary and therefore artificially motivated fate. A word to Lord Ernest of his marriage

would have absolved him from all need to plot and murder. Thus passion becomes hysteria, and the play has no real catharsis brought about by a sense of tragic inevitability. Yet the critics saw its merits and the potential of the poet who at nineteen had an amazing grasp of dramatic blank verse<sup>24</sup> and the ability to write lyrics of the order of "Poor old pilgrim Misery".

Within the larger perspective of Beddoes' development we see for the first time in this play the theme of a love union which can only be achieved in or through death as distinct from one which brings death or madness in each of the three fyttes of The Improvisatore. The latter theme recurs in The Romance of the Lily (1823) together with that of murder committed during a period of mental dislocation, but the former can be found in later works: in "The Ghosts' Moonshine"<sup>25</sup>, in the union of Wolfram and Sibylla in Death's Jest Book, and in a symbolic form in "Pygmalion", to give three examples.<sup>26</sup> However in The Brides' Tragedy the idea is neither as fully developed nor the wooing as arbitrary as it later becomes. Hesperus woos Olivia in these terms:

Then thou shalt be mine own; but not till death....  
Though madness rule our thoughts, despair our hearts,  
And misery live with us, and misery talk,  
Our guest all day, our bedfellow all night;  
No matter, all no matter.  
For when our souls are born then will we wed;  
Our dust shall mix and grow into one stalk,  
Our breaths shall make one perfume in one bud,  
Our blushes meet each other in a rose....  
We're nearer to our bridal sheets of lead...  
By twenty minutes' talk.

(11 iii 63-110)

A strange wooing indeed, yet redeemed by the mystery

of a union with and in nature further to be found in Dianeme's Death Scene, a fragment of The Last Man, and in the line

Turning to daisies gently in the grave  
("Death Sweet")

In the human situation of the play the sentiments are less artificial than they might seem. Hesperus at this point still has a wife whom he has won in the normal way, and he has not yet come to a decision to murder Floribel and achieve an earthly union with Olivia. The language betrays not so much a fascination with the idea of death as with that of becoming part of nature: the emotive force of the passage in its entirety reveals a pantheism rather than a fear of life, or of death. There are no graveworms in this vision, though Hesperus has a misanthropic side which he has revealed in l iii ll5f., and this kind of writing predominates in Death's Jest Book where there is no strict plot to be served. Some external circumstance turned Beddoes irrevocably towards this view of life while his mind was still malleable, but this first crisis was still more than a year away.

The publication of The Brides' Tragedy brought Beddoes' name before two of the leading poets of his day: George Darley, who reviewed the play in the London Magazine under the pseudonym John Lacy, and Bryan Waller Procter,<sup>27</sup> who subsequently became one of Beddoes' few close friends.<sup>28</sup> Beddoes had neglected his studies in the service of poetry and friendship,<sup>29</sup> and when in the summer of 1823 he resolved upon intensive study to make good the deficit, Procter furnished him with a letter of introduction to a young lawyer in Southampton named Thomas Forbes Kelsall. Kelsall found the young poet

a congenial and witty companion and immediately realised the quality of his work. At this time Beddoes was writing much and destroying most of it in his search for truth; this was a source of regret to Kelsall, who jealously guarded manuscripts Beddoes left with him in 1825 on leaving for Germany, thus beginning a lifetime of service to his name. If Beddoes could be called in any way ambitious, it was for fame, and this too he regarded as capricious and unjust.<sup>30</sup> What fame he has is owed entirely to Kelsall. His early publications would have ranked him below the now forgotten Procter in the perspective of history.

From the years 1823 - 5 Beddoes and Kelsall have left posterity with the fragments of The Last Man, Torrismond, Love's Arrow Poisoned and The Second Brother, all dramas; the poems Beddoes collected for a volume to be entitled Outidana; there are too notes on these plays<sup>31</sup> and poetic fragments, some of which parallel passages from these plays<sup>32</sup> or were later used in Death's Jest Book.<sup>33</sup> Of the unfinished dramas, Torrismond is undoubtedly the most perfect; unfinished and unfinishable, it contains a wealth of brilliantly taut writing which manages to say and suggest all within one act. These four plays were all in the process of being written more or less simultaneously, though The Second Brother is the latest of them.<sup>34</sup>

The fragment was regarded by the German Romantic theorist Friedrich Schlegel as an art form in its own right, and unfinished compositions abound among the major English Romantic poems. Torrismond comes nearest of the four plays to being a fragment in Schlegel's

sense and the manifestation of his "progressive Universal-poesie". Critic Ilse Gugler in a comparative study of the types of fragment in English and German Romanticism devotes a section to Beddoes,<sup>35</sup> since if not the most important of English Romantics, he is the one most given to fragmentary composition. In general, Beddoes was dissatisfied with what he wrote. His plots were ~~not~~ now original and clearly to complete his plays was a waste of time. They created no vehicle for expressing a truth,<sup>36</sup> and if Death's Jest Book did so, it was about Beddoes, not Man, and in the meantime he was seeking an intangible.

In the New Year of 1824 Beddoes spent some time with relations in Bristol. His mother's youngest sister was married to a Dr. John King, Swiss by birth, but a naturalised Englishman. It was King who later inspired Beddoes to study German and influenced him to go to Germany.<sup>37</sup> His cousin, Zoe King, was a little over-awed by the poet<sup>38</sup> though in her he found a friend and admirer such as he seemed able to attract in his youth. In March of that year Beddoes was painted by a Bristol artist, Nathan Branwhite. As a result of an illness he had lost his hair<sup>39</sup> and this gives a prominence to his eyes and the breadth of his forehead which must also have impressed the only other portraitist known to have painted him: Töhler of Zürich, in his forty-four~~th~~ year. Even if due allowance is made for the difference in style, there is a marked contrast between the lively, intelligent, even mocking face of Branwhite's Beddoes<sup>40</sup> and the fleshier face with a sober level gaze and an unsmiling mouth of Töhler's. Even at the time of the

first portrait, changes were imminent in his life which were to modify his nature.

Mrs. Beddoes and her daughters were in Italy at this time, and on May 6th Beddoes received an urgent call to his mother's deathbed in Florence. He left at once in the middle of his degree examinations, only to find that she had died on the fifth of the month. He spent some time in Italy before escorting his sisters back to England, as this was his first journey outside the British Isles.<sup>41</sup> His letter to Procter of June 8th shows the ~~xxx~~ extent to which he was captivated by all he saw.

We have the bulk of Beddoes' adult correspondence to his friends, though Kelsall was unable to procure the letters Revell Phillips received from Germany, as his widow destroyed all his correspondence.<sup>42</sup> He writes at length: literary criticism, details of his daily life and wanderings in Germany, and on occasions his own theories of literature.<sup>43</sup> The one subject he constantly avoids is himself, his own state of mind. Where self-revelation is explicit, he at once becomes apologetic.<sup>44</sup> Something may be deduced a posteriori from his letters, but for the effect of his mother's death we must turn to his creative writing for evidence.

During his first visit to Switzerland, on the return from Italy, he produced the "<sup>n</sup>Lies", subtitled "Written at Geneva: July 16". The emotions aroused by the beauty of the unfamiliar landscape form the basis of the poem, but gradually the thinking Beddoes emerges from behind the feeling Beddoes. He proceeds by associated ideas through music and its echo, its ghost, to the dead, and

ultimately to the lines

Some wretches are  
Now lying with the last and only bone  
Of their old selves, and that one worm alone  
That ate their heart: some, buried just, behold  
Their weary flesh, like an used mansion, sold  
Unto a stranger, and see enter it  
The earthquake winds and waters of the pit,  
Or children's spirits in its holes to play.  
(11.27 - 34)

These reflections take him farther than anything he has previously written about the body after death. This is the physical reality of the buried corpse, between the death and the flowers on the grave. The violation of the "weary flesh" by a stranger or by "children's spirits" suggests immediately some reminiscence of childhood now stimulated by actual experience. Beddoes' mind, attuned to artificial scenes of death and decay by his reading and writing, suddenly grasps personal physical implications, and this poem does not remain unique among his works. In fact, the death of his mother is the direct cause of the new attitude.

In spite of the years of separation from her, Beddoes must have had a deep attachment to his widowed mother to whom he dedicated The Improvisatore, a possibly talented and certainly romantic woman left unfulfilled by life.<sup>45</sup> Donner is undoubtedly correct when he states that where Beddoes' female characters are not drawn from literature they appear to be drawn from his mother.<sup>46</sup> This would account for the idealisation and the lack of flesh and blood characteristics as human lovers. And two months after her burial in foreign soil (the word "stranger", l.32, also seems to bear this connotation),



Beddoes was expressing what amounts to a horror of death.

He continued his prolific writing on return to England and almost at once produced the fragment "Dream of Dying":

                                  then I was dead;  
And in my grave beside my corpse I sat,  
In vain attempting to return: meantime  
There came the untimely spectres of two babes,  
And played in my abandoned body's ruins;  
They went away; and, one by one, by snakes  
My limbs were swallowed....

(11. 5-11)<sup>47</sup>

Beddoes had reached, at the age of twenty-one, the first major turning-point of his life; he became in the truest sense the poet of death, and with this came a sense of loneliness and a painful consciousness of his difference from those less shy and imaginative. The new attitude to life was momentarily compensated by the maturity of Torrismond which he wrote in the latter part of 1824. The horror of the "Dream of Dying" has no part in it, though the wild young Torrismond reveals in a moment of self-awareness another emotion which may well be applied to Beddoes:

I yearn, and thirst, and ache to be beloved,  
As I could love,.....

                                  Oh, I am not at home  
In this December world, with men of ice,  
Cold sirs and madams.

(Sc.ii, 78-83)

While it is dangerous to identify a dramatist with the ideas and attitudes of his characters, Beddoes undeniably put into his work much of himself, of his fears and aspirations. He is not Torrismond, nor is he Marcello, Isbrand or Melferic, but there is at the very least a feeling of empathy. Torrismond is like his creator,

one who enjoys congenial company while feeling a basic dissatisfaction and isolation because of personal shortcomings. The side Beddoes showed to others is revealed in the letters; the other was what the authorities at Göttingen sensibly perceived to be "spleen".<sup>48</sup>

In The Second Brother, begun late in 1824, Beddoes once again created an original plot. It was no less sensational than the others, but the writing is more controlled and powerful than in The Brides' Tragedy, with which, as the longest unfinished work of the English period, it may be compared. The second brother of the Duke of Ferrara, Marcello, is transformed from a wandering beggar to a beggar on a ducal throne with his brother's accidental death, thus thwarting the hopes of the youngest brother, the libertine Orazio. Marcello, spurned as an unknown beggar by Orazio, dedicates himself in his loneliness to hatred and the search for power:

Let me forget to love,  
And take a heart of venom: let me make  
A staircase of the frightened breasts of men,  
And climb into a lonely happiness!

(1 i 216-219)

The means to this is to be the creation of a new religion with Marcello as its high priest. The play breaks off in the middle of Act IV scene 1 and the action up to this point concerns Marcello's preparation for the crowning revelation of his new power. In this he is aided by the vengefulness of Varini, whose daughter Valeria Orazio has married and abandoned. Though she becomes reunited with Orazio, Varini forces them apart and has Orazio imprisoned for debt. Valeria goes to commit suicide, but though her cloak is found by the riverbank,

Marcello's men discover her alive<sup>4c</sup> and she is kept in captivity to be the instrument of his revenge and part of his plan.

Beddoes showed enough interest in his plot, which indeed had dramatic possibilities, to complete three acts, but once again it faded. In this case he found it pointless to persevere with the play. He had a theme which satisfied him: the vicissitudes of fate which make a beggar prince and beggar his noble brother, and the potential force of the lonely ambitious mind; but Marcello becomes the centre of the play and Orazio a negligible figure by contrast. Thus there could be no satisfactory external conflict, and no provision is made for the development of a conflict within Marcello. The whole focus of the play is therefore directed towards the unwritten conclusion, the justification of Marcello as an idea. There are indications of how the play was to end.<sup>50</sup> Marcello intends to make Valeria the crux of his plan: to prove his absolute power over life and death by raising her from the dead at midnight on the Campo Santo. Yet Marcello knew, and Beddoes knew, that she had not died, and while Marcello's aim would have been achieved by this fake, Beddoes' remained unsatisfied.<sup>51</sup>

The Romantic creed postulated that the imagination and the mind had the power to create its own reality, but Beddoes himself was so convinced of the power of the mind to dominate matter that he demanded it should have dominion over death itself. On his own deathbed he asked for a pastor<sup>52</sup>, but in his lifetime he constantly refused to seek his solution ~~in~~ in religious faith. The Bible granted him no proof of immortality to be appreciated by his rational being, as he later

confided to Kelsall,<sup>53</sup> and neither a fake resurrection scene nor the symbolic acceptance of death defeated by a life to come satisfied him. In a letter to Kelsall of early October 1824 he asks, "How do you like O'Connor?" Donner<sup>54</sup> believes this to be a reference to the claim of a nun, Barbara O'Connor, that she was raised from the dead. This provoked a discussion in the London Magazine, which Beddoes read,<sup>55</sup> and it appeared shortly before he began The Second Brother. Beddoes had already shown an interest in necromancy; in 1823 he had compiled notes on the Elizabethan John Dee and his associate Kelley, who had performed aerial flights.<sup>56</sup> This material had been used in The Romance of the Lily (1823). From the notes for Love's Arrow Poisoned it may be seen that he intended the usurper to be confounded by the fake raising of his brother, the king, who had been thought dead. The account of Barbara O'Connor a year later may have indicated the actual possibility of raising the dead in real life, not just in the realms of Elizabethan necromancy or Jacobean drama, and thus, though he did not complete The Second Brother, the basic idea was not rejected. Instead he began to contemplate the problem of death in a new light.

The months from October 1824 to June 1825 mark a new stage in Beddoes' development. Not only had the question of death taken on a personal significance and a new dimension, but there were changes imminent in his way of life. John King persuaded him to continue his studies at Göttingen: the alternative was Edinburgh where his father had studied, and like him Beddoes was to take up medicine. In preparation for this he began the study of German, slowly at first, but with increasing facility.<sup>57</sup> By March 1825 he was {over

recommending the study of the German language and literature to Kelsall and referring to several plays of Goethe he had read. He apparently knew German well enough to embark on a translation of the Nibelungenlied, which he abandoned after 120 lines,<sup>58</sup> and to translate something he found more congenial: Schiller's Philosophic Letters. The first part of these appeared in the Oxford Quarterly Magazine of March and June 1825.

Snow writes,<sup>59</sup>

The Philosophic Letters were the first open sign of that struggle within Beddoes' nature which was ultimately to destroy him,

and in fact it is Beddoes' own introduction which betrays him when he generalises in terms such as these:

All men of intellect and imagination  
will feel.....[that] they were shaken by  
the same tempest and haunted by similar  
phantoms.

Beddoes was conscious that he could not find an answer to his own terrors which satisfied both intellect and imagination, but primarily the intellect, hence his discontinuation of The Second Brother about this time. He was the son of Thomas Beddoes the rationalist, who could even extend this rationalism to the question of suicide, and of Anna Edgeworth of the poetic imagination. The intellect acknowledges only one valid mode of perception: reason; and the Philosophic Letters expose what Beddoes must already have known instinctively, the inadequacy of reason as a counter to the doubts of the imaginative being.

July of 1825 saw Beddoes a Bachelor of Arts, the author of two sizeable publications and some minor ones.<sup>60</sup>

With his own inner tensions heightened by direct experience and unresolved by any means within his power, he set off for Germany. With him went the title for his next play: "a very Gothic-styled tragedy, for w<sup>h</sup> I have a jewel of a name -- DEATH'S JEST-BOOK"<sup>61</sup>, and well it was to justify his capital letters.

#### B. 1825 - 1849: Germany and Switzerland

Thomas Lovell Beddoes arrived in Germany with his future largely undecided and his plans flexible. In a letter to Kelsall written almost immediately<sup>62</sup> he acknowledged his previous lack of concentration on his university studies, but added that he hoped to return to England with "a somewhat quaint and unintelligible tragedy, which will set all critical pens nib upwards, a la fretful porcupine." By September, in his next letter,<sup>63</sup> he was writing "I am preparing for deep & thorough medical studies, for I find literary wishes fading pretty fast". This was apparently a temporary attitude; he was becoming immersed in German ways and his interest in literature was now all the greater as his knowledge of German and his presence on German soil opened up a whole new realm of ideas and brought before him hitherto unknown writers. Ludwig Tieck is one of the first he mentioned to Kelsall: Tieck as the man who introduced the great Elizabethans to German readers.<sup>64</sup>

By December<sup>65</sup> he had established a daily routine: six hours of the twenty-four were devoted to sleep, the rest to study, and of these only one is allowed to the composition of "Death's Jest-book w<sup>h</sup> is a horrible waste of time". Beddoes was very much a man of extremes,

and from a life of leisure at Oxford and in London he turned with equal fervour to his medical studies. In the weekends he permitted himself a little relaxation, though he felt a new sort of partial isolation as he was not yet a fluent speaker of German. This ~~xxxx~~ does not seem to have been a source of any real frustration.<sup>66</sup>

The study of medicine indicated new possibilities to his enquiring mind; he had one unexpressed aim he hoped to fulfill in Germany, and this formed the link between his study and the deprecated Jest-Book. To Kelsall<sup>67</sup> he imparted a new "scientific" theory of literature:

Again.... I cannot help thinking that the study of anat<sup>y</sup>, phisiol-, psych-, & anthrop-ology applied to and illustrated by history, biography and works of imagination is that w<sup>h</sup> is most likely to assist one in producing correct and masterly delineations of the passions: great light w<sup>d</sup> then be thrown on Shakspeare by the commentaries of a person so educated. The studies then of the dramatist and physician are closely, almost inseparably, allied; .....The science of psychology & mental varieties, has long been used by physicians, in conjunction with the corresponding corporeal knowledge, for the investigation & removal of immaterial causes of disease; it still remains for someone to exhibit the sum of his experience in mental pathology & therapeutics, not in a cold technical dead description, but a living semiotical display, a series of anthropological experiments, developed for the purpose of determining some important psychical principle - i.e. a tragedy.

He concludes this with the telling words

Thus far to show you that my studies, pursued as I pledge myself to pursue them, are not hostile, but rather favourable to the development of a germ w<sup>h</sup> I w<sup>d</sup> fain believe within me.

As a dramatist about to turn physician Beddoes believed himself to be uniquely suited to realise the ambition he jealously guarded: to make his play a revolutionary document which would prove on a scientific basis that man had power over death.<sup>68</sup> In anatomy he hoped to find the answer that would satisfy both the rational and the romantic or imaginative aspects of his mind for the first time. In the letter containing the first hints of his hope he revealed more contentment than ever before. He had an aim in life, his studies promised success, Göttingen life was congenial, and the future, though uncertain still, was viewed in terms of travel and study. From this position he sees the positive potential of his loneliness:

.....I fear I am a non-conductor of friendship, a not-very-likeable person; so that I must make sure of my own respect, & occupy that part of the brain wh<sup>n</sup> should be employed in imaginative attachments, in the pursuit of immaterial & unchanging good.<sup>69</sup>

This mood continued into 1826. Death's Jest/Book progressed, and by April the fourth and fifth acts were half complete.<sup>70</sup> Beddoes felt enough confidence to impart to Procter the great secret. This he did in the second of the verse letters to the English poet,<sup>71</sup> and the very fact that he wrote in blank verse underlines the basic self-consciousness which had always prevented him from revealing his inner self in cold sober prose. The satirical mock-heroic tone of the verse betrays this inhibition, though he has no doubt that the play will rid death of all terror:

but of his night...  
To rob him, to un-cypress him i<sup>n</sup> the light  
To unmask all his secrets....



.... send him back again,  
An unmasked braggart to his bankrupt den.  
For death is more 'a jest' than life: you see  
Contempt grows quick from familiarity.  
I owe this wisdom to Anatomy.

Any doubts he has concern the quality of his own writing:

Why did you send me the Cenci? I open  
my own page & see at once what damned  
trash it all is. No truth or feeling.

So he says in the letter to Kelsall of April 1st.  
However, he continued his accustomed life, studying literature and journeying into the countryside around Göttingen; and presumably writing, for in October he wrote to Procter that Death's Jest Book was finished in the rough.<sup>72</sup>  
To his friends in England he must have seemed perfectly content and happy in the new life, for nothing in the letters contradicts this impression.

If Beddoes' letters to Kelsall were infrequent, they were at least lengthy and entertaining. The opening pages of the letter of April 26th 1827 are devoted to German literature and in particular to a new discovery: Ludwig Tieck is no longer merely the translator of English plays and the author of Dichterleben, but the creator of "nursery tales in dramatic form". Yet the inner tensions were renewed, and Beddoes could no longer conceal entirely from his friends the disillusionment that had come upon him, destroying completely all the hopes he had expressed in the verse letter and entertained for so long. From a summary of Tieck's Rotkäppchen he passes to an account of his own activities:

My next publication will probably be...  
an enquiry into the laws of Growth &  
Restoration in organised matter.

The associations of the last idea lead him directly into a confession of his lost faith, doubly terrible in its utter disillusionment with both science and religion:

I am now already so thoroughly penetrated with the conviction of the absurdity & unsatisfactory nature of human life that I search with avidity for every shadow of a proof or probability of an after-existence, both in the material & immaterial nature of man..... but really in the New T. it is difficult to scrape together hints for a doctrine of immortality..... I am haunted forever by it; & what but an after-life can satisfy the claims of the oppressed on nature, satiate endless & admirable love & humanity, & quench the greediness of the spirit for existence....

Beddoes had found himself not to be privy to the great secret which he calls "certainly the best part of all religion and philosophy, the only truth worth demonstrating: an anxious question full of hope & fear & promise".<sup>73</sup> At the age of twenty-three he had reached the second turning-point of his life. There is little doubt that he died by his own hand in 1849,<sup>74</sup> and if we are to believe the Göttingen university authorities,<sup>75</sup> he had already made attempts on his life during the years he spent there. The actual date of these and the means he used are ~~unknown~~ unknown; that he was unsuccessful may indicate that he was not then desperate enough to make a serious attempt to kill himself. The confession to Kelsall is tempered to a minor degree by the poem which follows it, and in any case he must have passed the worst of the crisis. The loss of faith brought with it a cynicism which found at hand the means to save Beddoes through his own

literary creation, Death's Jest/Book.

He set to work to make the first fair copy of the play, which until then had been fragmentary and unrevised. The draft copies are lost, as Beddoes seems to have burnt much of his writing on leaving Göttingen,<sup>76</sup> but the alterations and additions he made must have changed the whole tone and emphasis of the play.<sup>77</sup> He saved it, and his own pride, by applying to his work a literary doctrine learnt from Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel: that of Romantic Irony.<sup>78</sup> Tieck's Romantic Irony differs from Schlegel's;<sup>79</sup> but Beddoes developed both forms to suit the purpose of his own play. On the other hand he learnt also from August Wilhelm Schlegel, and like him from Shakespeare. Within three weeks of his confession to Kelsall he wrote again,<sup>80</sup> and in his words on Shakespeare's Sonnets he showed a new and mature appreciation of the detachment a writer must cultivate, particularly one like himself:

[Shakespeare] had long learned that there were mysteries in the feelings and passions of the soul, some of wh<sup>h</sup> he had too rashly revealed..... He had uncovered to profaner eyes some of the furthest sanctuaries of the heart.... &... this repentance & sorrow for the violation .... speaks so sorrowfully in that little poem..... I (excuse, if you laugh at, this egotism of insignificance) will not again draw the veil from my own feelings to gratify the cold prying curiosity of such as the million are...

In the post-script he refers to his words as expressing "a way of thinking w<sup>h</sup> grows upon me daily".

Thus Beddoes set about to disguise with Romantic

Irony the whilom confession of his own soul. The irony of Tieck and the Schlegel brothers was imposed on the almost complete play, emphasising the satirical rather than the objective. If Beddoes had gained nothing more from his German literary studies - and this is not the case - they still would have been of immeasurable value to him.<sup>81</sup> By October 1827 he had passed the crisis.<sup>82</sup>

In early 1828 he returned to England to take the degree of Master of Arts at Oxford, and most of the short visit was spent at Clifton with the Kings. For Zoe, his cousin, he produced the "Lines Written in an Album at Clifton", a long poem of some eighty lines. In 1824 he had composed a sonnet for her which expresses the same need to seek and foster truth as he imparted to Kelsall in December 1825. The "Lines" of March 1828 bespeak a deep affection for his cousin<sup>83</sup>, but the "world-wandering stranger" who is Beddoes is too scarred by experience to write on this occasion in an apt vein, and too conscious of his solitude. He departed for Göttingen in April.

Like his creations Isbrand and Marcello, Beddoes was inspired by the desire to make something of himself to justify his lonely existence. In his case, Death's Jest Book was to do this. In March 1829 the manuscript of the play arrived in London to be read by Kelsall and Procter and submitted by them for publication, but they found it too startling, and its faults too obvious, to be considered without further revision.<sup>84</sup> Procter suggested, without specifying, the erasure of certain scenes and passages, and it would seem that they were those most coloured by Romantic Irony, and therefore incomprehensible to English readers.<sup>85</sup> Beddoes acknowledged<sup>86</sup>

that what Procter referred to as conceits and mysticism could result from a mode of thought and expression developed during the four years in Germany. The deeper implications of the play could not have failed to escape them, so reticent was Beddoes about himself.<sup>87</sup> He promised to revise the play in the summer of 1829, as "in the autumn I return to London".<sup>88</sup> However, he did not. Six years elapsed before he revisited the country he already referred to as "Cantland".<sup>89</sup>

The indirect result of his friends' judgment was to make of the play a succubus which fed upon all his poetic inspiration until in despair he ceased to amend and replan. The direct result was to induce an even greater consciousness of his own insignificance, and the first suicide attempts seem to have occurred about this time.<sup>90</sup> Events culminated in August 1829 in an act of defiance of which his friends knew nothing, but which was recorded in the Göttingen archives.<sup>91</sup> The details we have are those of the police and court reports, according to which on the night of August 12th-13th Beddoes became fighting drunk and caused disturbances which twice necessitated police intervention. Nor did he submit meekly to authority, then or subsequently. He aggravated the crime by demanding wine at a restaurant while the university court was still dealing with the case, and was only saved from the consequences by the leniency and understanding of the authorities who knew his melancholic tendencies; he was told merely to leave Göttingen within twenty-four hours. For this reason he may not have returned to London, if indeed he had intended to.

As a result of this serious clash with established authority, the first of many such which were to disrupt

his life in the next years, he moved south to the university at Würzburg.<sup>92</sup> With him went a young Russian Jew named Bernard Reich, who had been Beddoes' closest friend among the students at Göttingen.<sup>93</sup> Through Reich he had become acquainted with Hebrew culture and the bone of immortality called Luz. This duly found its way into Death's Jest Book, but Beddoes had no faith in it.<sup>94</sup> "Luz is an excellent joke", he wrote to Kelsall<sup>95</sup>, but it served the purpose of the revised play, which was a joke against its author in any case. The friendship went deep, and if, as seems possible, Reich died shortly after the move,<sup>96</sup> he may have been the partial inspiration of "Dream Pedlary", one of the first poems of Beddoes' mature period.<sup>97</sup>

Beddoes, who had been a radical at Oxford by his own reckoning and manifestly an admirer, like his father, of the French Revolution,<sup>98</sup> now found a new outlet for his energies. He had finally achieved a victory over what Donner calls his "skeleton complex", and he accepted death as a release from life. The mature poems, too often disregarded by critics as a separate entity, express this resignation. "Dream Pedlary" states for the first time what he now knew:

Out of death lead no ways;  
Vain is the call.

(ll. 36-7)

Nor is it the single utterance of this nature.<sup>99</sup> Like other creative artists of his own century who had faced ultimate despair, he threw himself into the social causes of his day.<sup>100</sup> Poetry took second place to politics, and when he turned momentarily to it, he produced his best! work of the order of the Song from the Waters,

"The swallow leaves her nest", "Threnody" and the song of Thanatos.

Europe was in a state of political ferment, and in Würzburg Beddoes found ample opportunity to work for "the immaterial and unchanging good". So active did he become that he did not leave Würzburg on gaining his degree of M.D.<sup>101</sup> A measure of his status is given by the fact that he became a member of the German radical organisation, the Burschenschaft, and indeed as an active participant in their affairs.<sup>102</sup> Beddoes thus having thrown in his lot with history, his actions were duly reported in the press, and government agents kept a watch on him. His life ironically came to fulfil the symbolism of the concluding scene of Death's Jest Book, in which Mario, the embodiment of Freedom, kills Isbrand, the embodiment of Beddoes' spiritual aspirations.

The aim of the Burschenschaft<sup>c</sup> was a united Germany; their hatred directed itself against the twin powers of Russia and Prussia. Poland, oppressed by Russia, gained a great measure of their sympathy, and when the Polish nationalist hero General Rybinsky visited Würzburg Beddoes was one of the speakers at a banquet in his honour. The speech was printed in the Bayerisches Volksblatt of March 29th 1832. This was not Beddoes' first appearance in the German press. In the period 1831 - 1832 he published anonymous articles in the Volksblatt which the researches of C.A.Weber authenticate beyond any doubt.<sup>103</sup>

Through the medium of his political writing Beddoes found the opportunity to make the fullest statement of

his mature and hard-won attitude to death. On the death of the English statesman Brougham he writes:

Wer nicht sterben kann ist der, welcher nichts Unsterbliches mehr hat, das er der grossen Geisterquelle, aus welcher die Menschenseelen wie kleine Bächlein klar und trübe herunterfliessen, zurückgeben kann. Desto geneigter zum Sterben sind die, deren Leben ein Streben nach Erleuchtung und Wahrheit, das heisst nach dem Weltgeiste selbst gewesen ist: die Seelenwelt hat zu starke Verwandtschaft mit ihnen, und unversehens verlieren sie sich, die Unsterbliches suchen, in die Ewigkeit.<sup>104</sup>

The metaphysics which seem at variance with the radical propagandist nature of Beddoes' article strengthened in fact his convictions and made him all the more dangerous to those in power. As a liberal Englishman he must have been something of a figurehead; and as an orator, speaking with conviction in a harsh voice and an imperfect accent, he must have drawn attention to himself and his cause. He became identified with popular sentiment to such an extent that the Bavarian government issued a deportation order on July 10th 1832. He invoked all his powers as an academic and an Englishman, writing to the rector of the university, the king, and the British minister at Munich.<sup>105</sup> All this and a stratagem by his creditors failed, and he made a triumphant exit from the city, leaving the Würzburger Zeitung to record him as "der allgemein beliebte Doktor Beddoes".<sup>106</sup>

Via Strassburg, one haven for expatriate radicals, he travelled to another: Switzerland. With many another refugee he entered the new university at Zürich, and like them furthered the radical cause from a safe



place. Beddoes was one of the first to matriculate at the university, which drew teachers and students alike from the flood of political refugees entering the city. Once again he did not make the move alone: his one close friend at Würzburg, Professor Johann Lukas Schönlain, whose fame had brought Beddoes originally to that university, also went into voluntary exile as the result of repeated clashes with the Bavarian authorities.

Zürich had enjoyed a liberal government since 1830 and thus attracted those who wished to promote a similar regime in their own country. The press was dominated by radical foreigners and there was constant pressure on Zürich from the states whose nationals continued political activities there. However, Beddoes quickly made friends in high places and survived the order of July 24th 1834 which made foreigners involved in political life liable to deportation.

In spite of his profession of content expressed in the letters from Göttingen, it seems that the years in Switzerland were the happiest in Beddoes' stormy career. His letters to England were more infrequent than ever and gave little indication at any stage of his true feelings,<sup>107</sup> but there is enough documentary evidence to show that he was leading an active political life which suited him and gave his existence a sense of real purpose. When he turned to poetry, he proved conclusively that he had conquered his horror of death and found it a place in a total world view. The attitude of "Dream Pedlary" and the fragment of Death's Jest Book entitled "Mourners Consoled", later condensed to six lines,<sup>108</sup> was that of his maturity, and persisted. He had relegated poetry to second place; it was pure

poetry now and no longer the product of a destructive desire. The grim intellectual wit behind "Squats on a Toadstool" mellowed into the broader humour of "The New Cecilia" and the Dirge, "Let dew the flowers fill", formed an instructive contrast to the earlier Dirge, "Today is a thought".

As always, Beddoes enjoyed a great deal of leisure. In 1835 he was almost appointed to the newly established chair of Comparative Anatomy at Zürich, but in spite of the representations of Schönlein and the support of others he was refused at the last minute, probably because he had published nothing.<sup>109</sup> Thus his time remained, as before, his own, and he spent it as he wished, mainly in writing and political work.

Between 1832 and 1837 he was engaged in compiling the collection of prose tales and lyrics for a book to be called The Ivory Gate; the lyrics represent some of his finest work, and several found their way ultimately into Death's Jest Book, which he also hoped to publish in the same volume. Kelsall received a long letter in May 1837 which contained "The New Cecilia", originally for The Ivory Gate, and the song "As sudden thunder", which Beddoes clearly intended for Death's Jest Book, since he writes apropos of this, "And so I weave my Penelopean web and rip it up again". In the same letter also he informed Kelsall that he did not "intend to publish or republish anything of an earlier date (except D.J.B.)"; a major qualification. Snow and Moldauer actually date the final text of the play and x the new Act 1 from this year; Donner dates it as late as 1844, giving conclusive evidence to support this, and indeed it seems that Beddoes had not then incorporated all the

fragments used for it into the whole.

The complex of political troubles amid which Beddoes found himself in Switzerland <sup>has</sup> ~~have~~ been thoroughly and accurately documented elsewhere,<sup>110</sup> and it need only be noted that the poet was personally involved to a minor degree, making his name well known with increasing effectiveness. Art and politics became a single cause, leavened by Beddoes' own particular sense of humour. For instance, the celebrated incident of the production of Henry IV in January 1838 was used as an opportunity to further the radical cause.<sup>111</sup> Nor had Beddoes outgrown his propensity for practical jokes, as evidence for this period proves.<sup>112</sup> His wit was employed in a more spectacular fashion in the one piece of polemical writing to which he signed his name: the Anti-Straussianischer Gruss which appeared in March 1839, though he had published the first of his political poems earlier.<sup>113</sup> The occasion of the Strauss pamphlet was an incident in the long controversy over education in Zürich which became focused round the appointment of D.F. Strauss to the vacant chair of Theology at the university. The move failed, but Beddoes' pamphlet in support of Strauss went into a second edition and earned Beddoes a name as a satirist.<sup>114</sup> It also caused him to be served with another expulsion order, in October of the same year, which he avoided by re-enrolling as a student at the university. However, Schönlein had departed after some years' hesitation for Berlin, where he took up a post at the university and later was made court physician. Beddoes could hardly have regarded this as less than an apostasy in view of his friendship for Schönlein and his expressed faith in his integrity.<sup>115</sup> In April 1840

Beddoes himself left Switzerland, precipitately and at night.

There is no known reason for the hurried flight, unless Beddoes at last felt apprehensive about his position as a radical foreigner involved in Swiss domestic issues. It was some months since his main ally, Keller, had fled<sup>116</sup> and he had weathered two crises already. He returned to England and gave a single lecture of a projected series of three to a handful of people. Those who saw him at the time, Kelsall not being one of them, noted the changes which fifteen years of un<sup>6</sup>settled living had wrought.<sup>117</sup> His visit was brief; however proud of his country's achievements he had been abroad, as at Würzburg, the reality did not please him. He went to Berlin and stayed two years, with the exception of another short visit to England in 1842.

Meanwhile his health was failing and he became prone to neuralgia and rheumatism. For this reason he went to Baden in Aargau in Switzerland in 1842-3 to take sulphur baths. Then he returned to Zürich, where once again he began to contribute political verse to the press. At some stage during the period after April 1840 he had taken up Death's Jest Book for the last time and welded the fragments he had into a new Act 1. The actual process of revision went nã further.<sup>118</sup> One of his last and finest poems, "The swallow leaves her nest", found its way into the new act, and this and other revisions extended it still further, even beyond the length of many stage plays. Though his intention had been, among other things, to shorten the play,<sup>119</sup> he was no more capable of this than of discarding it altogether.

As his life drew to a close, Beddoes obviously felt more and more his lack of personal ties and personal fulfillment; the freedom which had enabled him to throw everything into a decade of work for social causes lost its sense of direction. He still followed the study of medicine,<sup>120</sup> but the outside world which had sustained his interest in life began to fail him. England and Germany alike disappointed him, and Schönlein and Keller had betrayed his confidence in them. Beddoes travelled more extensively in the years after 1840 than ever before. This is not without significance, for though he had always been restless, moving from one lodging to another, he now travelled from state to state with an increasing and almost compulsive frequency.

It was in 1844 while in Frankfort that Beddoes formed the last important friendship of his life, and the most contentious, with Konrad Degen. Whatever the differences in status and intellect, they shared a common interest in the theatre, and the attachment meant much to the poet.<sup>121</sup> He made one final visit to England in mid 1846 which became protracted through ill-health. His behaviour on several occasions also evinced extreme eccentricity, and Mrs. Proster, the wife of the poet, went so far as to believe that he was actually insane.<sup>122</sup> He saw Kelsall too, for the first time in nineteen years; Kelsall whose patience had been taxed by Beddoes' failure to see him on any of the previous visits.<sup>123</sup> The meeting with the man who had been his most devoted admirer for so many years must have underlined further the fact that he had achieved nothing tangible to justify such faith in his talents.

September 1847 found him back in Frankfort, and

shortly afterwards occurred the first of several incidents that led more or less directly to his death. He cut a finger while dissecting and blood poisoning resulted. For six months he lay ill and saw no-one but Degen, whom he perhaps valued for his lack of association with the past. Once recovered, he set off on a tour of Switzerland, where in the Cigogne Hotel at Basle he opened an artery in his leg with a razor and was removed to hospital. Clearly this was an attempt at suicide, for he aggravated the condition by tearing the bandages off his leg, which became gangrenous and had to be amputated. At last he communicated with his family, writing to Anna, but he concealed the truth of the affair and forbade her to come to his bedside. He recovered somewhat and even began to walk, but in the evening of January 26th 1849 he died.

The hospital recorded him as "gestorben an Apoplexie"; his physician, Dr. Ecklin, told Kelsall in 1868 that "in his opinion [death was] the direct result of a self-administered poison - all the symptoms being otherwise wholly unaccountable & corresponding with those appropriate to the application of a very strong poison (called Kurara or - ) found in his possession".<sup>124</sup> If in fact Beddoes had in despair made one final attempt on his life after botching so many, the circumstances surrounding it are mysterious and almost insoluble. Snow is the only critic to question whether the death was suicide<sup>125</sup> but Donner overrules him and accepts it.<sup>126</sup> If Beddoes died a natural death it would form the crowning irony of his career. "I am food for what I am good for - worms", he wrote in his deathbed letter to Revell Phillips; and, "I ought to have been among other things a good

*or ironical, because it would have  
saved someone using a different type of*  
poet". To Dr. Ecklin he bequeathed a stomach pump, <sup>person?</sup> a  
strange bequest for one who had died either of curare or  
of natural causes.<sup>127</sup>

His body was interred in the cemetery at Basle and  
later removed to another grave which was unmarked and is  
now lost. His friends in England ensured that the works  
by which we may judge his capacity to be "a good poet"  
did not suffer the same fate.

### Notes

- 1 Anna, Thomas, Henry and Mary Eliza. Mary  
d. 1833; the other two survived the poet.
- 2 Donner, Snow, Meyerstein, Heath Stubbs etc.
- 3 A.C.Todd reveals the hitherto unknown fact  
that Dr. Beddoes even considered suicide  
himself - in 1800, on rational grounds.  
Such evidence is interesting, and not only  
for its own sake. See Anna Maria, the  
Mother of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, p.139.
- 4 Weber, pp. 106-107.
- 5 Donner, TLB, pp. 35-50, enlarges on this  
and all aspects of Dr. Beddoes' career, of  
which he gives the best account to be found  
in a biography of the poet. Weber also  
deals at length with Dr. Beddoes.
- 6 The episode of the prescribed treatment  
for tubercular patients has been quoted  
and commented on ad nauseam. See Donner,  
TLB, p.46, Snow, p. 4 etc. For other  
details, see Weber, pp.196-7.
- 7 Cf. any work on German literature as known

in England at the time: e.g. those of Stockley and Stokoe - see bibliog.

- 8 Leopold 1, "Lines, Written at Geneva" (1824), l.3lf., "Dream of Dying", l.7f. (see also pp. 21-3 below); and in a less serious manner, "The Oviparous Tañlor".
- 9 See Todd's illuminating article. Beddoes seems to have a dual inheritance of compulsive restlessness and disorientation.
- 10 Hiram Kellogg Johnston, TLB? a psychiatric study, Psychiatric Quarterly, 1943. It makes no allowance for Beddoes' age and probable range of experience at the time of writing, with the result that he concludes that the poet was anal-sadistic with homo-sexual tendencies. This sounds impressive. Beddoes was obviously neurotic and was thought to have had a homosexual attachment to Degen. However, Johnston must have known all this before he began his study, and he makes no concession to literary fashions of the day as Beddoes copied them. Furthermore, he states that Donner gives a "fairly full account of the Degen episode" whereas Johnston's conclusions are actually directly opposed to Donner's findings, which he seems to invoke as support. This is another example of the state of Beddoes criticism, and the sort of article which casts suspicion on the legitimacy of the pastime of applying Freudian psychology to the work of dead writers.
- 11 His earlier education was received at Bath Grammar School, the family having moved to this city after the death of Dr. Beddoes.
- 12 Cynthio and Bugboo
- 13 It is interesting to note that Johnston also neglects to allow for normal adolescent depressive states.
- 14 The first two themes give us in a later form Isbrand and the prophetic poems; the latter "Man's Petty Universe".
- Handwritten notes in right margin of entry 10:*  
I would suggest the appearance of dissection (causes of body/entails etc) was connected to his time.



- 15 Professor Donner does not agree on this point; he says he finds little but "Anne Radcliffe - Byronic novel of terror matter" in these lines, though this derives from the Jacobean source. Certainly the distinction is a minor one, but I feel compelled to retain it.
- 16 TLB, p.69.
- 17 Donner, *ibid.*, p.69.
- 18 It should be noted that while modern tastes condemn Beddoes' descriptions of female beauty and critics speak of his inability to portray women, some have found otherwise. Of the description of Emily, Strophe VII, Feller commends the "treffende Beobachtungsgabe", and Garnette Miller, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Sewanee Review July 1903, p. 314 commends the same passage.
- 19 A similar scene occurs early in the monumental Horrid Mysteries, translated into English from the German of Karl Grosse. It was probably imitated elsewhere.
- 20 Snow, pp. 198-200 and Donner, Works, pp. 710-711 give the text of the memoir. The ballad is given by Donner, pp.707-710, and Feller, pp. 131-133. A comparison of the two will show that in the memoir the young man actually marries Lucy after having fixed his attentions on the noblewoman, which is not the case in the ballad.
- 21 Grete Moldauer, Thomas Lovell Beddoes, p. 95, details the weaknesses and inconsistencies resulting from the elaboration.
- 22 Zoe King's attitude to the news of Beddoes' suicide is an interesting correlative to this. October 2nd 1858 she wrote to Aelsall: "We can but hope that the dreadful poison from the dissecting wound had so changed the nature of his system that he could not be considered as healthy in his mind." Donner, TLB, p.87f. gives the history of this type of murder, and also comments on the traumatic

- experience of Hesperus with reference to Beddoes himself.
- 23 Elizabethan reminiscences abound in this play. See Feller, pp. 47-8, Moldauer, p. 103, Donner, TLB, ch. 3.
  - 24 Donner gives a comprehensive account of Beddoes' prosody up to this point in the chapters of TLB dealing with the relevant works.
  - 25 This is very similar to the poem entitled "From the German", a parody of the prolific playwright Raupach, whose works Beddoes called "windeggs". Donner gives both, Works, p.95. If the parody is intended as a joke, it is uncomfortably similar to Beddoes' own style.
  - 26 See also "Song of a Maid whose Love is Dead", "The Old Ghost", Dianeme's Death Scene etc.
  - 27 He wrote under the name of Barry Cornwall.
  - 28 There were four in England: Kelsall, Procter, a fellow student of Pembroke College named Bourne, and Revell Phillips. Donner gives details of the two latter in the introduction to The Browning Box. With the exceptions of Zoe King, Reich and Degen, Beddoes does not seem to have formed any other friendships which remained undisillusioned.
  - 29 He seems to have spent an entire term in the company of Henry Card, dedicatee of The Brides' Tragedy and fellow lover of literature.
  - 30 He helped to gain publication of the post-humous poems of Shelley, whom he considered neglected. See also "Stanzas Written in Switzerland", l.11f., "Love is Wiser than Ambition", and general references to his hatred of critics and reviewers in letters.
  - 31 The notes for Love's Arrow Poisoned (Donner, Works, pp.521-4) are of interest to the student in view of the methods of characterisation proposed.

- 32 For example, "Doubt" cf. The Brides' Tragedy.
- 33 For example, "Leonigild's Apprehension" cf. Death's Jest Book IV iii; Fragment XXXVIII, Works p. 166 cf. DJB II ii.
- 34 The introduction to Donner's edition of Works gives dates xxviii f.
- 35 Das Problem der fragmentarischen Dichtung in der englischen Romantik (Swiss Studies in English, 1944). This is a thorough and sound study of Beddoes' fragments and the reasons for the large proportion of unfinished work. One point which is not mentioned is that some of the fragments are mere jottings of ideas which might have been destroyed by a poet who achieved publication.
- 36 Torrismond perhaps excepted. The plot sketch of LAP proves as much. The Last Man was a theme that captured his imagination; mere lines are extant and he seems to have acknowledged that it was beyond him, though he wished to write it at a later date - see undated letter XVlll, Works p. 598f. The Second Brother is another case altogether - see p.24f. below.
- 37 Zoe King's testimony - letter to Kelsall November 14th 1852. (Browning Box)
- 38 Zoe King: letter to Kelsall January 22nd 1853. (ibid.) Snow suggests there may have been some attraction between the cousins, but it seems unlikely on the evidence we have.
- 39 Joint letter from Procter and Beddoes to Kelsall, April 12th 1824. Beddoes appears to have acquired a wig which he is not wearing in the portrait.
- 40 His shorn condition no doubt partly inspired the mocking expression.
- 41 Childhood holidays had been spent with his mother's family at Edgeworthstown in Ireland.

- 42 Kelsall to Browning, June 16th 1868. (Browning Box) The isolated fragments reproduced by Donner in the Works were supplied by Phillips for use in the Memoir by Kelsall.
- 43 Letter to Kelsall December 4th 1825; there are numerous other instances.
- 44 Ibid., final paragraph.
- 45 This is the impression left by Todd's article which should be consulted for further detail as the only real source. The comments below on Beddoes' female characters should be qualified by what Todd says about his mother as a widow in ill-health and of unstable temperament.
- 46 Introduction to Plays and Poems of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, a selected edition, p. xxxf.
- 47 Lines 8-9 suggest dissection.
- 48 Donner, TLB, p.267; Weber, Appendix D.
- 49 Valeria is wandering in a state of shock in the city. Moldauer believes she is actually a ghost, though this must be a hallucination. The disfigured corpse found by Varini is left unexplained, but there must be one to further Marcello's plan and for the same reason Valeria has to be alive.
- 50 Donner, introduction to short edition of Plays and Poems, p.xxxiv.
- 51 Beddoes found the theme of fake resurrection in Marston, a Jacobean dramatist whose satire he found congenial. For non-literary sources see p.26 below.
- 52 Though he was of course an Anglican, there was no Anglican priest in Basle and he was attended by the Lutheran pastor Huber, whom Zoe King met in 1858.
- 53 Letter of April 20th 1827.
- 54 Works, p. 749, note to letter XlII.

- 55 He seems to have read it consistently to judge by comments in his letters, e.g. to Frocter, February 1824; to Kelsall, January 11th 1825.
- 56 Donner, Works, pp. 538f. Kelley also claimed to have spoken to a dead man.
- 57 Compare the two letters to Kelsall of October 4th 1824 and March 25th 1825.
- 58 Undated letter to Kelsall of March or early April 1825, number XVllll in Works.
- 59 Snow's discussion of the PL, pp.35-6 is detailed and informative.
- 60 The latter comprise "The Comet", "Pygmalion" and the translation of the Philosophic Letters.
- 61 Letter to Kelsall June 8th 1825.
- 62 July 19th from Hamburg.
- N.B. All misspellings, abbreviations and other eccentricities in the passages quoted from the letters of Beddoes from this point onwards are the poet's own.
- 63 Letter to Kelsall September 29th.
- 64 For a list of the books borrowed from the university library at Göttingen - a mere fraction of his reading - see Weber, Appendix E.
- 65 Letter to Kelsall December 4th 1825.
- 66 Ibid. What he observed at Göttingen of other students and the intellectual climate seemed to give him great satisfaction, as indeed he states in this letter.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 The 19th century saw the production of another work of literature whose aims were equally "scientific": the Rougon-Macquart series of Emile Zola, which was intended as a controlled

experiment. Unlike Zola, however, Beddoes hoped to prove his hypothesis before completing the play whereas Zola, producing his characters entirely from imagination, could not with justification lay claim to anything more than a fictional representation of a theory. Both writers were the product of the age in which medical science began to emerge from the former cocoon of magic, philosophy and unproved theorising, and both lived in a period where their claims, though fantastic, were feasible. In Beddoes' case there was no actual evidence to deny that resurrection could be achieved, and non-scientific speculation and mythology seemed to suggest that it was in fact possible.

- 69 The statement directly preceding these lines, "I feel myself in a measure alone in the world, & likely to remain so", taken with the rest seem to suggest a diffidence which in itself may have contributed to his continuing bachelorhood.
- 70 letter to Kelsall April 1st.
- 71 March 7th 1826.
- 72 Post-script to letter of October 9th.
- 73 Part of the passage quoted.
- 74 Snow, Appendix A pp. 181f., produces a theory that he did die a natural death. In view of the evidence, this would be extremely ironical, and in any case the present writer finds the viewpoint untenable.
- 75 The documents are reproduced by Weber, Appendix D.
- 76 See letter to Phillips, December 18th 1833.
- 77 See the following sections of the present work.
- 78 See Part Three A of the present work for a detailed discussion of this.

- 79 This point is discussed in Chapter 3 of  
Tieck's Romantic Irony by A.E.Lusky.
- 80 May 13th 1827
- 81 Snow writes:  
An elaborate thesis may some day be made out  
for the influence of German Romanticism upon  
Beddoes, but one may well doubt if it will  
go much further than externals. A maturing  
mind rather than geographic location is  
responsible for the differences between  
Death's Jest Book and The Brides' Tragedy...  
Processes were completed in Germany which  
were begun earlier, and it would be mis-  
leading to ascribe them to German influence.  
(Chapter VI, pt.3)  
The present thesis attempts to strike a sen-  
sible balance between the statements of the  
last two sentences, and makes no pretensions  
to being "elaborate". However, influences  
there were, and they deserve to be documented  
in terms of their relevance to Beddoes' work.  
For a factor which may have influenced Snow's  
judgment, see p. 66 below.
- 82 In the letter to Kelsall of October 21st  
he mentions for the first time his source,  
at the same time denigrating his own poetic  
ambitions as the result of a cheap desire  
for fame. He concludes with the strange  
and oblique statement, "What would have been  
my confusion & dismay, if I had set up as a  
poet, and later in my career anything real  
and great had started up amongst us & like  
a real devil in a play frightened into des-  
pair & fatuity the miserable masked wretches  
who mocked his majesty." He continues, "These  
are my real and good reasons for having at  
last rendered myself up to the study of a  
reputable profession..." The juxtaposition  
of ~~these~~ these statements seems to suggest  
he had his own personal struggle in mind  
when propounding his hypothesis.
- 83 Donner, Works, p.71, ll.7-25.
- 84 Beddoes' covering letter of February 27th

admits faults but implies a certain amount of confidence in its talk of reviewers. In view of the importance of the play to its author, it would seem that this enumeration of faults is, as he thinks, a mere disclaimer.

- 85 These were largely omitted by Kelsall in the 1850 edition, possibly partly as a result of Procter's critical judgment, and by Gosse and Colles after him. That ~~these~~<sup>these</sup> were in question is indicated by the letter to Procter of April 19th 1829. The letter to Kelsall of April 30th indicates that Procter also objected to "Squats on a Toadstool" and "Old Adam".
- 86 April 19th.
- 87 The letters, it is true, give certain clues to his states of mind, but these are part of a pattern including DJB and in fact most of his work. His friends were too close to Beddoes to read the evidence impartially, embedded as it is in long letters and a play they did not understand.
- 88 Letter to Procter of April 19th.
- 89 Letter to Kelsall of February 27th.
- 90 The documents given by Weber, Appendix D, indicate that they predate fairly closely the expulsion and the rejection of the play therefore.
- 91 See Weber, Appendix D.
- 92 Donner gives a full account of Beddoes' political life from this point onwards; such details are outside the scope of this thesis.
- 93 As early as April 1826 Beddoes mentions having marched with the Russians in a procession at Göttingen. He refers to Reich specifically in the letter of October 21st 1827.
- 94 lll iii 449f.



- 95 27th February 1829.
- 96 Donner, introduction to 1950 ed. of Plays etc.  
p. xlv.
- 97 Beddoes' work may be divided as follows:  
1. Youthful work; that preceding mother's death in May 1824.  
2. Works written mid 1824 - 1829 during the period of self-discovery.  
3. Mature works; 1830 onwards. DJB was largely complete by that date and Beddoes' new acceptance of death finds expression in the poems written in that year and shortly afterwards for the first time.
- 98 "Lines Written in the Album of One who had Watched the French Revolution"
- 99 Cf. "Mourners Consoled" and the speech on Brougham.
- 100 Rimbaud joined the French colonial service in North Africa; Oscar Wilde turned to socialism and social comment while in Reading Gaol. These are exceptions rather than an example of the general tendency, despite the Junges Deutschland group of writers; Poe and Baudelaire did not seek this outlet, nor did the 18th century writers who died mad. Blake however combined the two causes of poetry and polemics in a unique manner.
- 101 There is some doubt as to whether he actually received the degree, though he seems to have used the title and others certainly did so. He may never have bothered to submit the dissertation required as a ~~form~~ formality and thus was not recorded as having gained a diploma. See Donner, TLB, p.288. Weber, p.208n. says Beddoes did definitely graduate as M.D.
- 102 The Burschenschaft was normally not open to non-Germans, Jews aside, hence Beddoes was unique.
- 103 Weber, ch.VI. The articles are printed in

Weber's Appendix E and in Donner, Works, pp. 560-573. Donner gives translations, pp. 734-742.

- 104 Bayerisches Volksblatt, January 26th 1832. Weber, p.216, finds a similarity to a passage of Hume. However it is interesting that Beddoes chose to make this statement in German, a language he would have found more congenial to the prose utterance of such sentiments than English.
- 105 Donner prints the last of these, Works, p.655.
- 106 July 27th 1832. Donner (TLB, p.35) remarks that the poet's father was more famous than he was during his lifetime: he was "the celebrated Dr. Beddoes", while TLB was "der bekannte Dr. Beddoes". The newspaper tribute shows that the poet could be more than bekannt, and if he read it he probably appreciated it more than any suggestion of fame.
- 107 The most extreme example is furnished by the two letters to his sister written on his deathbed.
- 108 DJB 11 ii 36-42
- 109 The chair was subsequently granted to the dramatist Georg Büchner, author of Dantons Tod, and himself an active political worker. However, he died four months later.
- 110 Donner, TLB, chapters X - XII. This is the most authoritative account and the present study is indebted to it for relevant information.
- 111 Donner, TLB, pp. 313-4.
- 112 Ibid., p.311, note 3.
- 113 In the Schweizerischer Republikaner; see Donner, Works, p.143f. for the texts of these and later polemical poems.
- 114 Zoe King heard from Degen in 1858 how "when there was a paperwar among the professor &<sup>c</sup>, Beddoes made verses on it & mixed up so many

old German words, the professors had to consult their dictionaries". No doubt Beddoes was frequently involved in controversies, and Donner assumes in his biography that Degen was not referring to the Strauss affair. However it seems natural to assume that this was in fact the "paper war" of which Beddoes told Degen. Professor Donner, on enquiry, states that he has little doubt that this is the Strauss feud, but German scholars assure him that there is nothing in Beddoes' pamphlet which would have made it necessary for them to consult their dictionaries. If this is the case either Beddoes or Degen must have been guilty of deliberate exaggeration.

- 115 When it was suggested that Schönlein might become personal physician to the king of the Belgians, Beddoes proudly asserted that S. was rather the man to have a king in personal attendance on him than the opposite. Cf. Phillips' letter to Kelsall (Browning Box, no.LXXXI):  
.... utter honesty and love of truth. These qualities did estrange him from Schönlein & I believe Keller..... who... were exposed to the blandishments and corruption of the Court of Berlin, where their avarice and ambition were fed and pampered.  
There is only one source possible for these stern moral judgments.
- 116 Letter to Phillips, September 28th 1839.  
He may have felt a third crisis to be imminent, particularly with Keller no longer there.
- 117 Principally the account of Mabel Collins, Dublin University Magazine, Vol.94, 1879, based on an eye-witness account of the lecture. Snow, perplexed, dates this as 1828, (note 23, p.210), but Donner has more facts to hand and obviously places this correctly. Snow appears to be unaware of the 1840 visit.
- 118 The actual composition of DJB, dates apart, is investigated in the following part of the present study.
- 119 Letter to Kelsall, March 9th 1837.

- 120 He attended lectures in Berlin 1840-2 (Donner, TLB, p.352) and wished to study with the chemist Liebig in 1844, but was unable to do so. (Letter to Kelsall, November 13th 1844)
- 121 The difference in age is the most contentious point of all. Zoe King in 1858 described Degen as "a young man abt 30 - nice looking", which statement Gosse accepts and enlarges on. (Works, 1928 ed., introduction to Vol.1, p.xxx) Donner however states that Degen was born on October 8th 1811, and therefore only eight years younger than Beddoes. He also gives biographical sources for the life of Degen, who later became an actor. (TLB, p.372 text and n.1) In this case Zoe King must have mistaken a man of almost forty-seven for one of thirty. Professor Donner states that he has the birth-date from a handbook and has not inspected the church registers, yet he finds nothing unlikely in Zoe King's mistake, which must therefore be regarded as such. The difference in class would hardly have mattered, in view of the way of life Beddoes had chosen to lead on the Continent.
- 122 As she did not approve of Beddoes, this opinion cannot be accepted without reservations. Alcohol, ill-health and eccentricity were cause enough in themselves for his behaviour on several occasions.
- 123 See Kelsall's letter of July 21st 1844, reproduced by Donner in Echoes of Beddoesian Rambles, Studia Neophilologica, 1962.
- 124 Letter of Kelsall, Browning Box no.CXL1.
- 125 Appendix A, pp.181-8.
- 126 Browning Box, p.172, note to letter CXL1, 1.30.
- 127 If the hospital records are correct, Beddoes lay insensible for some time before his death, and Ecklin states that the poison was found in his possession after decease. Snow argues that Beddoes had no opportunity to buy it after the amputation but does not consider the

possibility that he may have had it by him for some time. It would seem that he avoided as long as possible taking direct means to end his life, and as a medical graduate he had the knowledge to select an effective poison.

Secondly, unless the story of the coma is only a fiction to support the apoplexy claim, the hypothesis that Beddoes used curare is immediately ruled out. Sir William Osler, who contacted Gosse, pointed out what is clear to anyone with even the most superficial knowledge of poisons: that curare paralyzes the nerve-centres, inhibits respiration, and is almost instantaneous in effect. It is also administered sub-cutaneously. Snow avoids any mention of the stomach-pump, which may be irrelevant, though an oddity in the circumstances. Professor Donner does not believe that the poison was curare, with which the present writer concurs. Presumably it was another vegetable alkaloid, administered orally, probably inducing a period of coma, and no doubt as painless as possible, though there can be nothing but speculation on this point.

## Part Two

### DEATH'S JEST BOOK

Thomas Lovell Beddoes has been wrongly called "The Last Elizabethan"<sup>1</sup>; ~~but~~ in reality he was no more an Elizabethan than any other dramatist of the early nineteenth century who sought to revive British drama by looking back to the days of its greatest achievement and attempting to emulate this in theme and content. There are incontestibly Elizabethan elements in his works. The Brides' Tragedy is closest to the Elizabethanism of the Romantics<sup>2</sup> and contains a great number of reminiscences of plays of this period;<sup>3</sup> yet the total effect is one of melodrama: character and action are improperly integrated, and pathos is the substitute for "high seriousness". Beddoes was a poet, and it was in this capacity that he learnt from the Elizabethans the art of blank verse, which he produced with facility at the age of nineteen and in Death's Jest Book with a virtuosity that cannot be dismissed as mere imitation.

Among the Elizabethans, Beddoes admired next to Shakespeare Marlowe: Marlowe, the first dramatist to use the legend of Dr. Faustus in his tragedy of aspir-

ation. Beddoes himself created two characters in the Faustian tradition, Marcello and Isbrand, and in doing so he showed himself to be a Romantic. Marcello and Isbrand make no compacts with the devil: Goethe, writing a quarter of a century earlier, retained this aspect in his Faust and made of it philosophy, but Beddoes' heroes have the unshaken faith in the power of the mind and imagination over life, death and the external world which was their creator's, and a Romantic creed.

From the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights Beddoes borrowed the revenge theme, and it was as a revenge tragedy that Death's Jest Book was originally conceived, for as Coxe writes:<sup>4</sup>

Beddoes, indifferent to [psychiatric quirks], instinctively returned to something like a doctrine of humours, of ruling passions, since his mind increasingly reached out for absolutes: the meaning of death, the vanity of human wishes, the nature of human freedom. What better convention, what more fascinating ritual, could he have chosen than the old revenge tragedy, with all its layers of association, its formal appeal to the spectators' power of suspending disbelief, its open invitation to rhetoric and excess.

The form, the blank verse, and a hint of the possibilities afforded by a comic sub-plot were all he gained of real value from them. The sensational and intricate plots of which the notes to Love's Arrow Poisoned seem almost to offer a parody were valueless when he imitated them, for they obscured the truths he wished to express instead of illustrating them. Without the precedent of the revenge framework Beddoes might never have written Death's Jest Book, but there is no denying

that the intricacies and absurdities of the plot detract from the beliefs he tried to express in it.

#### A. Genesis

Beddoes left England in 1825 with an acute personal problem, a reading knowledge of German, and the title for his next play. In the four years which followed he worked slowly but consistently on its composition, and when he failed to achieve publication of the play which had cost him more to write than any other creation of his fertile imagination, he added to it, rewrote, and tried to improve. All this has left its mark on the play as we now have it. It is cumbersome and unactable: the latter because he wrote, not for the stage, but for himself; and into the three versions of the play which now exist went much that he learned in the course of four years' writing and fourteen of revision. It is a play that he could not have written in England; the German environment contributed to it in a manner which will be discussed in the final part of this study.

In Germany he found the idea from which he created the action of the play, though he only imparted the actual source to Kelsall in October 1827:

... the Jest book - or the Fool's Tragedy - the historical nucleus of which is an isolated and rather disputed fact, that Duke Boleslaus of Münsterberg in Silesia was killed by his court fool A.D. 1377, but that is the least important part of the whole fable.

Although at least one critic has attempted to apply the



"isolated....fact" to the play, with comic effect,<sup>5</sup> Beddoes obviously meant exactly what he said: the source is the least important part, and, writing when his own play was more or less finished in outline, he was aware of the fact. The word fable can only refer to his own composition, and he is justified in his literal use of it. He presumably came upon Flögel's Geschichte der Hofnarren shortly after his arrival in Germany, but the title of the play came first; this alone demonstrates that he was only looking for a vehicle to express somehow the idea implicit in it and already in his mind from the time he had set aside The Second Brother.

The source itself was undramatic despite its implications for a story-teller: a historical chronicle of an unpremeditated killing, probably not without impetus from past events, but crude enough.<sup>6</sup> Beddoes looked to the past to offer a means to turn this fact to dramatic capital, and Death's Jest Book took the form of a revenge drama. The revenge theme interested Beddoes for its own sake and he followed his models, at least initially, with thoroughness. The actual motivation to vengeance is external to the action: the present duke of Münsterberg, Melferic, has killed the rightful duke and usurped the throne. The disinherited sons, Wolfram and Isbrand,<sup>7</sup> have come to court in disguise to pursue their revenge, but of the two Isbrand is the one whose hatred is implacable. Wolfram, the knight, has grown to assume with his role some of the loyalty to his liege lord which is proper to it; Isbrand, in his servile role of court fool, simply grows more obsessed. In accordance with the tradition

the original crime in the play is aggravated by a further one, the murder of Wolfram, as in Hamlet the murder of the prince's father is followed by Gertrude's hasty remarriage with the usurper.<sup>8</sup>

To this extent the play is a revenge tragedy. In actual fact, however, Isbrand does not kill the duke: the resurrected Wolfram carries him alive into the tomb. Through the mechanics of the revenge plot Beddoes comes to the major theme of the play as he originally saw it: the resurrection of Wolfram. As a grim jest whose only justification is Isbrand's desire to make his vengeance reach to Judgement Day, he substitutes Wolfram's body for that of the duke's dead wife, and he is resurrected in her place. Although the revenge theme continues beyond this scene, Act III scene III, Beddoes in his diffuseness had lost sight of the single thread long <sup>before</sup> before that.

The play has a sub-title in the Jacobean tradition: The Fool's Tragedy.<sup>9</sup> Isbrand does not die like Hamlet, in the execution of his vengeance, but for a different reason, and in order to appreciate the final form of the play it is necessary first to trace in broad outline the changes it underwent in the course of composition. Many of these, it will be seen, spring from the philosophy of its author at each given point.

#### B. Execution

As recounted in the preceding part of this study, the first draft of Death's Jest Book, 1825-6, is lost, but it dates from the period of Beddoes' greatest op-

timism and faith in his own powers. With the loss of this faith came the loss of his youthful facility in writing. The years 1822 onwards had seen a spate of creativity which cannot be accurately assessed as so much was destroyed,<sup>10</sup> and although Beddoes wrote more sparingly at Göttingen,<sup>11</sup> still he completed the play in a comparatively short period by any but his own standards.

Although he had begun and discarded at least four plays prior to commencing Death's Jest Book, transferring part of each to the next,<sup>12</sup> he did not discard the new work in his disillusionment of early 1827, and there are reasons for this. Melveric's conjuring could no longer be any more real than Marcello's, yet the play had its formal theme in the revenge plot which in the Elizabethan mode was accompanied by a sub-plot that served both lines of action. Not only this, but in Isbrand Beddoes had created a character who could assume all the poet's new cynicism and despair and impart his Weltanschauung. Isbrand's connection with the resurrection was tenuous, but ~~xx x xxxxxxxx~~ he overshadowed the play and the rest of the characters, including Melveric, his adversary in the revenge, to such an extent that the plot has no effective conflict. In the last act, as will be seen, Death's Jest Book suddenly ceases to be Isbrand's play, but for this also there are reasons which must have been real enough to his creator. The third and most important reason for continuing to work on the play was Beddoes' recent discovery of Tieck's theory of Romantic Irony. The nature of this irony as Beddoes used it is the subject of Part Three A of the present work, and its importance must not be underestimated. Grete Moldauer speaks of the "reinste romantische Ironie" of much that Beddoes makes his characters do or

say, and claims direct German influence;<sup>13</sup> Snow discounts this, referring to Schlegel's theory of Romantic Irony.<sup>14</sup> However, it is fairly obvious that the Romantic Irony to be found in Death's Jest Book is a hybrid type of Beddoes' own, adapted to the demands of his subject, and only by implication the self-parodying form used by Tieck and considered by critics to be debased. It is present, for instance, in the speeches of Mandrake in the resurrection scene, which are the very passages omitted by Kelsall whom Colles and Gosse both followed in preparing their own editions.<sup>15</sup> Thus they were not accessible to either of the above writers. By means of Romantic Irony Beddoes in fact dissociated himself from the resurrection which had formerly been crucial to him, and though Mandrake's appearance from the tomb may also have the double purpose of continuing the parallel sub-plot and diverting any laughter which might otherwise have accompanied the appearance of Wolfram,<sup>16</sup> this alone neither justifies nor explains the prose speeches.

Already in 1826 Beddoes had to some extent rejected what he refers to as "Parnassian foolery",<sup>17</sup> and adds, "I can bear a satire still tho', and write one, as Jest-book shall show". The satirical anti-Romantic aspect of the play is centered in Isbrand, the denial of other-worldly values.<sup>18</sup> Edgell Rickword<sup>19</sup> names as an instance of this his mockery of moon and nightingale and we may also add Wolfram's reference to Cleopatra in "Old Adam", since Wolfram at this point has become Isbrand's alter ego in the play. The satire is further present in the perspective of the final scene of the play, which opens out into cosmic dimensions.

This dual vision is an aspect of the play itself.

There are two Deaths: one the Romantic death wooed by Sibylla which is akin to love; and the death personified in the Songs of V iv, of which Beddoes said "Death is a vulgar dog"<sup>20</sup>, dismissing this perhaps a little too lightly. It is the medieval death which he recalls in his own Dance of Death, the death he formerly wished to send back

An unmasked braggart to his bankrupt den.

The duality is justified in view of the two aspects of Romanticism and satire which emerge from the troubled career of the first version of the play, though Beddoes does in fact indicate which he finds the truer.

The unfavourable verdict of Beddoes' friends showed him that he must either discard four years' work and the fruits of four years' agony of mind, or make drastic and thorough changes. He did neither. Though he decided on ways to improve the plot,<sup>21</sup> based on the Athulf-Adalmar-Amala scenes, the fragments arising from this were never incorporated into the play. The dominant mood of "Love is Wiser than Ambition" is resignation; a rejection of fame and glory which ill accords with the depiction of Adalmar in ll iii of the first version as

not Peace's lap-dog  
But Battle's shaggy whelp.  
(ll.56-7)

Likewise the second passage, "A Great Sacrifice Self-Compensated", which also contributes to this theme, and if the new twist were to make "the Cain & Abel scene... tell better" it could not have been expressed in such terms as

Alone in the eternal is my hope.  
Took I thee, that intensest joy I have  
Would soon grow fainter and at last dissolve  
But, if I yield thee, there is something done  
Which from the crumbling earth my soul divorces,  
And gives it room to be a greater spirit.

(ll. 8-13)

The change was within Beddoes, and his characters became modified in accordance with the new outlook he had not then completely assimilated. As within the play, they were mouths through which he spoke, and this Adalmar belongs to a situation within the poet's mind and not consistent with the previous conception of the character.

A longer fragment which also found no place in the revised play and also sketches an intended improvement is the scene entitled by Kelsall "Murderer's Haunted Couch". The resurrection had lost its original significance, and Beddoes intended it to be once again subordinated to the ~~the~~ revenge, occurring perhaps only in Act V,<sup>22</sup> where it would have served the cosmic satire. Isbrand was therefore to take over the earthly retribution from Wolfram, whose function would merely be as before, to administer the coup de grace to Melferic. One effect of Beddoes' revisions was to throw Isbrand increasingly into relief. In this new scene, Elizabethan tradition and Romantic Weltanschauung are fused: the avenging Isbrand taunts the duke with his crime and promises him not death but the curse of life and consciousness.<sup>23</sup>

The lyrics and fragments composed between 1829 and 1844 reflect Beddoes' attempts to make a better play. The earliest are those which conflict most in tone: the poet's vision altered almost entirely in the course of four years, and what he wrote immediately after 1829

represents a reaffirmation and a restatement of his attitude to life; and life in Beddoes' world view still had its centre of gravity in the fact of death. By the time he made the last draft he had assimilated his experiences: the two Adalmar fragments were not used, and it is doubtful whether they would have been even if substantial changes had been made to the later acts. On the other hand, a place might have been found for the other unused fragment, "Murderer's Haunted Couch".

As an index of the progress of Beddoes' thought we may conveniently take the three versions of the speech made by Sibylla at Wolfram's bier, ll ii. The Sibylla of the first is a woman without will, who mistook friendship for love with dire consequences, and at the bier thinks only of herself and an early death:

Bring me to a nunnery:  
There shall I soonest learn the way to heaven.  
.....we do not part for many days.  
A little sleep, a little waking more,  
And then we are together out of life.<sup>24</sup>

It is a negative viewpoint, that of the poet's youth, yet the preceding dirge expresses the same idea in poetry which persuades that its beauty states a basic truth. But this Sibylla is little more than the instrument of the plot, the cause of Wolfram's death.

However, Beddoes found in her the medium for the expression of the view of death that came to him at Göttingen, and he subsequently composed the longer speech "Sibylla at Wolfram's Bier":<sup>25</sup>

Dead, is he? What's that further than a word....  
Aye this is cold, that was a glance of him  
Out of the depth of his immortal self;  
This utterance and token of his being  
His spirit hath let fall, and now is gone

To fill up nature and complete her being.  
      .... Say not he's dead, -  
The word is vile - but that he is henceforth  
No more excepted from eternity.

This passage of twenty-six lines in its entirety is a statement of Beddoes' personal philosophy as are the Adalmar fragments, and in the final version it is revised so that it is truer to its function in the context of the play. The fragment is isolated from any dramatic purpose, whereas Sibylla's speech of ll ii 32-55 contains the essentials of both earlier versions within the scheme of the action so that she comes closer to the idea of the Romantic whose love-death is positive.

As Beddoes grew older and grew further away from the original impulse of the play the additions he made fall into two main categories: the lyrics, and the prose passages of Mandrake and Isbrand. The original Act 1 contained no lyrics; the final version has no fewer than eight, of which two were taken from The Ivory Gate.<sup>26</sup> The purpose of each of these is to intensify the mood<sup>27</sup>, and the economy of expression conveys more than all the lengthy dialogue. One in particular is immeasurably effective in its context. The dying Wolfram addresses Melveric with the fateful words

I will avenge me, duke, as never man.

This line is not in the original, nor is the Song from the Waters which follows, "As sudden thunder": three terse stanzas whose condensed imagery conveys a prophetic message of resurrection. It demonstrates that, while Beddoes could use a dramatically effective technique, he was unable to apply it to dialogue. "My cursed fellows in the jestbook would palaver immeasur-



ably, & I could not prevent them", he wrote to Kelsall.<sup>28</sup> To the end he retained this fault. He was too much in love with words and ideas to be concise: the extended metaphor, the development of a random theme, the cumulation of associations, all these fascinated him. Examples exist in Mario's speech lll iiii 112-142 and in the duke's account of Ziba's origin, lll i 40f. (b version). Not much perhaps in a play as long as Death's Jest Book, but not the only ones, and they are symptomatic of Beddoes' inability to confine his imagination.

In later years he found a means of justifying to some extent this prolixity. The revised Act 1 is discussed in greater detail in Part Three D of this study, but the nature of the extensions to the prose passages must be mentioned here. In the exchanges of Mandrake and Isbrand, the alchemical is developed for its own sake: Mandrake is more specifically the alchemist. Kate/Joan addresses him no longer as "dear Mandrake" but as "dainty Homunculus",<sup>29</sup> a name reminiscent of Paracelsus, whose disciple he is. He approximates more than ever to Isbrand, whose speeches seem no more than those of a brother fool, at least superficially. "The division of the speeches between them seems arbitrary", says Donner.<sup>30</sup> However, a satirical element may be discerned beneath Isbrand's riddles of scene 1 which serves as a prelude to the bitterness of his words to Wolfram later in the same scene.<sup>31</sup> The anachronisms are intentional. Mandrake is changing his life because the world is changing about him:

.... the owl's brown eye 's the sky's new blue  
(l i 69)

Isbrand's desire is to change the world. Such is the

distinction between the two fools. The original Isbrand had not been introduced so precisely, but Beddoes now wrote from the standpoint of the completed play, and the revisions he made indicate a desire to resolve inconsistencies, emphasise one potential theme, delineate character, and produce dramatic force.

### C. The Poet's Vision

I have a bit of FIAT in my soul,  
And can myself create my little world.

So says Isbrand in his short-lived moment of triumph.<sup>32</sup> In Death's Jest Book itself Beddoes likewise creates his little world, and despite the diffuse and protracted nature of the play it is possible to evaluate the essential vision he presents. His is a complex Weltanschauung: in the final version the revenge theme has prominence but the implications and modifications of the traditional form are peculiar to Beddoes alone, and it ~~gains~~ gains a significance which extends beyond the world of the play. We may compare, for example, Marston's Antonio's Revenge, a play Beddoes knew and borrowed from in his own composition.<sup>33</sup> The moral world of Marston's play demands that Antonio avenge his father's murder; this he does. There are no metaphysical overtones, no swerving from the main line of the action. Beddoes was at the mercy of his own insubordinate intellect: the theme of death fascinated him, the character of the fool interested him, and the twin problems of power and liberty strove for an honest assessment in the alien revenge world. Of these, all but the second determined the course of his life, though it too was a recurring motif.<sup>34</sup> These four themes became interwoven into the revenge

tragedy, giving it a depth and intellectual complexity which alone preclude it from the possibility of actual production, and it is these which must be examined in an attempt to interpret the moral world of Death's Jest Book.

The situation in which the play opens has already been stated;<sup>35</sup> it is the traditional revenge premise, and Beddoes does not hesitate to use the techniques of his models. The angry Isbrand taunts Wolfram with the words

....come not again for fear of me and our  
father's spirit: for when he comes to me  
in the night, screaming revenge, my heart  
forgets that my head wears a fool's cap...  
(l 1 254-6, c; b  
varies a little)

We are presented immediately with the important figure of Isbrand the avenger, disguised as a jester. The role of fool and the revenge are inseparably linked on both the story and the symbolic levels. Isbrand's task of revenge is legitimate and in the guise of court fool, undeclared, he is protected by the cap and bells and free to pursue his justified aim. The ethics of the revenge tragedy, therefore, must be his ethics, and when he departs from them or attacks the existing moral order he encompasses his own downfall. The seed of this is within his own character. Isbrand's tragic flaw is hybris: overweening pride and ambition which place him at the mercy of Nemesis, the ruling principle of Death's Jest Book. Prematurely he rejects his disguise and involves himself in an unnecessary conspiracy to seize what is rightfully his.

The idea of the disguise adopted by Isbrand is not

original to Beddoes. The German source may have suggested it, but it is more likely that he found a hint in Antonio's Revenge, where Antonio adopts, briefly and not until the fourth act, the same disguise. Unlike Marston, Beddoes makes full use of the symbolism of the fool's costume, not only for the purpose of satire, but in the climax of Act V scene iv, and with even greater expertise he exploits the significance of the fool in the creation of his moral world.

As Marston expresses it,

O, he hath a patent of immunities,  
Confirm'd by custom, seald by pollicie,  
As large as apaticus thought.

(1111 1 13-15)<sup>36</sup>

and though both Marston<sup>37</sup> and Beddoes<sup>38</sup> mention the inferior social status of the fool, this dehumanisation is proper to Isbrand. Besides this, the character of the true Fool is of an almost sacred nature, particularly in folk tradition.<sup>39</sup> Beddoes gives us two fools, though neither is what he seems, nor keeps to the subplot where the fool of Elizabethan drama properly belongs, with one notable exception.<sup>40</sup> Death's Jest Book gives a new dimension to the fool and the theme of Folly. Isbrand is a fool in appearance, at least initially; Mandrake a fool in reality, and he never loses this buffoon quality though he plunges into learned study and is used as a vehicle of Beddoes' self-ironisation in the subplot before running off into oblivion.

Into Mandrake's mouth Beddoes places the speech and song which as a disconnected fragment Kelsall entitled "The Spirit of Folly". Here Beddoes expresses his own view of the world:

The fool, who signifies humanity, is laid aside and will soon be forgotten.... and now, Socratic Star, thy Demon, thy great Pan, Folly, is waning from thy side... he who hath no leaven of the original father Donkey in ~~xx~~ any corner of him... has lost his title to humanity.

(1 i 48-50, c text)

Though the opening to the song introduces a contradictory element, the passage is a requiem for the fool, a sad acknowledgement that the world is dedicating itself to unhallowed seriousness:

The world's no stage, no tavern more,  
Its sign, the Fool 's ta'en down.<sup>41</sup>

Isbrand's answering speech, also part of the same fragment, confirms this interpretation.<sup>42</sup> Beddoes' point is contained in Wandrake's lines,

Now is every man his own Fool, and Fate for us  
all.

(1 i 55-6, c text)

This is the spread of folly in the sense of stupidity, and such folly, it seems, is the subject of the first three lines of the song, a fact that makes for confusion.<sup>43</sup> It may also be connected with Isbrand, who in becoming both Fool and Fate forfeits his rights and his "immunities". Through Isbrand Beddoes expresses the implicit relativity of folly and wisdom, as in this scene where he concludes a series of apparently obscure statements with the words

But I grow delirious, and utter grave Truths.  
(1 i 83)

He next appears at the bier of the murdered Wolfram in Act II scene ii, still in the guise of jester. However, the duke's second crime, which is intended to be a further incentive to revenge, in spite of the incon-

sistency in Beddoes' plot,<sup>44</sup> causes Isbrand to reveal a hatred and lust for a revenge which, it becomes clear, will not only expiate the crime but satisfy the demands of his own personality:

I am... a good contented man; peaceable  
as an ass chewing a thistle; and my thistle  
is revenge. I do but whisper it now:  
but hereafter I shall thunder the word, and  
I shall shoot up gigantic out of this pis-  
mire shape, and hurl the bolt of that revenge.  
(11.97-101)

When he takes the body of Wolfram it is ostensibly to further his revenge;<sup>45</sup> but the revenge now is only a means where formerly it had been manifestly an end:

My brother...is an earthquake seed, and  
will whisper revenge to earth, and I to  
heaven; and though we whisper now,  
thunder shall speak the word hereafter:  
and it shall be the thunder of the wheels  
of a war-chariot in which I shall triumph  
like Jupiter in my fool's cap, to fetch  
the duke and his sons to Hell, and then  
my bells will ring merrily, and I shall  
jest more merrily than now: for I shall  
be Death the Court-fool.  
(11.140-146)

The development of the fool theme already demonstrates how Isbrand has overstepped the limits of his mortal nature and is aspiring by implication, though not yet explicitly, to usurp the powers of a god; for to Beddoes Death is the most powerful of them all: and for this Promethean hybris he must suffer cosmic vengeance.<sup>46</sup> Two principles rule this play: those of Nemesis and Retribution,<sup>47</sup> Greek and Elizabethan, and the denouement satisfies both. Isbrand's spirit has outgrown the role of court fool from which he formally abdicates almost immediately in a scene inspired by Tieck.<sup>48</sup> For a moment he returns to it to make a last

use of his licence for satire:

Yonder minister shall have my jacket; he  
needs many colours for his deeds.

(11 iii 93-4)

In disposing of the tokens of his office he evokes,  
on the other hand, the cosmic significance of the fool  
as the "Spirit of Folly" fragment expressed it:

O cap and bells, ye eternal emblems, hiero-  
glyphics of man's supreme right in nature;  
o ye, that fall only on the deserving,  
while oak, palm, laurel and bay rankle on  
their foreheads, whose deserts are often  
more payable at the other extremity:  
who shall be honoured with you? Come,  
candidates, the cap and bells are empty.

(11. 101-6)

In the final scene of the play they find a wearer and  
he is such as to emphasise the symbolism of the fool,  
while here Isbrand formally dedicates them to Death;  
and Mephistopheles-like, Death answers the call.  
For the second time Isbrand juxtaposes the concepts of  
folly and wisdom in words which, like all his utterances  
in this scene, bear an ironic significance:

... call me fool no longer, for my wisdom  
is on the wane.

(11. 76-7)

One of the basic themes of this play is the paradox of  
folly and wisdom and the nature and place of each; it  
is implicit in Beddoes' satirical vision. Thus Death  
will find

...the angel's record of man's works and  
deeds, and write with a lipless grin on  
the innocent first page for a title,  
'Here begins Death's Jest Book'.

(11 iii 115-7)

All wisdom is folly in Isbrand's eyes. True wisdom

may be found in the antics of the fool; there is none in the knowledge sought by the thinking man. The discovery of knowledge is truly the original sin; man's nature compels him to go beyond his appointed limits, to seek to be more than he is, no matter what destruction, physical or spiritual, this involves. This was Beddoes' sin, if an innate compulsion can be so called, and led to his suicide. The situation is foreshadowed in the supreme irony which links the play to the life of its author in the fact that not only must Isbrand die for seeking to be "more than man", but Duke Melveric who wished like Beddoes to conquer death is dragged into the tomb before his time. In Death's Jest Book Beddoes derives the satire from the twin meanings of the word folly, and his final statement resolves itself into an acknowledgement of the destructive nature of the desire for transcendence. This is the Romantic ~~desire~~ desire, and to the Romantic in Beddoes we must add the rationalist in him; the result is a poet who could never resolve his position and express a positive vision. Resignation came only from maturity and an acceptance of what is: the laws of the universe. And it is <sup>these</sup> ~~that~~ that rule also in the world of the play.

The technical form of the Elizabethan drama afforded Beddoes a means to mark the exact transition from Isbrand the fool to Isbrand the court intriguer. In the course of 11 iii he casts off the traditional prose of the comic or "low-life" characters and assumes the blank verse of the "noble" personages, though he never loses the turn of speech more appropriate to a jester.<sup>49</sup> The themes of folly and revenge disappear almost entirely, only to re-emerge in the final scene. The latter takes on a new guise altogether and is diverted towards the



resurrection of Wolfram. In the sections concerning Isbrand it becomes mere intrigue.

Plots and conspiracies are commonplace in tragedy,<sup>50</sup> and Isbrand, the "creator and destroyer",<sup>51</sup> steps down from his Jovian role to conspire in a ruined cathedral at midnight. He shrewdly notes the potential enmity of Athulf and Adalmar and fosters it, though as far as the outcome is concerned, "the real author is the law of retribution",<sup>52</sup> and Isbrand plays only the role of "stage-manager".<sup>53</sup> The incident is intended as a parallel to the duke's murder of Wolfram, his own blood brother, and the latter's ghost states this;<sup>54</sup> though Isbrand acts with the same intention<sup>55</sup>, his motives are not above suspicion. However, Isbrand emerges as the focal point of the play, the eye of the whirlpool into which all the floating ideas are gradually drawn. The resurrection is the last of these as it loses its objective validity and is submerged in the vagaries of the complex revenge on two levels while retaining a certain symbolic value. The final scene reveals the revenge theme in an entirely new guise.

Death's Jest Book is a revenge play, and it is Isbrand's play, yet Beddoes' attitude to him is ambivalent. Beddoes betrayed him, says Donner,<sup>56</sup> and having done so made him die an ignominious death improper to the great revenger of the original conception. He must die, for he commits a double sin against his father's spirit and against humanity and the values Beddoes himself held. By his own moral standards Isbrand is evil because he acts for the wrong reasons. Beddoes' adherence to a form four centuries old led him into contradictions: Isbrand is a Renaissance figure in a modern situation,<sup>57</sup> and the thirteenth century setting is Beddoes'

own convenience, to be treated as arbitrarily as any mythological setting.<sup>58</sup> Act III introduces the first portrayal of the conspiracy on stage and Isbrand invokes the forces of Nemesis in that the decisive assertion of his own free will must bring him to an ultimate acknowledgement of the moral law of Necessity.<sup>59</sup> Beddoes introduces the last of the main ideas of the play in this context: the relative problems of liberty and power; and in doing so he makes his one unqualified statement, tempered though it might be on the emotional level by his involvement with Isbrand.

The conspiracy sections of III iii, the scene which also contains the resurrection, do not further the action of the play. The plot against Torwald, Melveric's regent, is already formed<sup>60</sup> and Isbrand calls the meeting on the pretext of issuing final instructions. Like so much of the play, the scene merely serves Beddoes with an opportunity to express his ideas in dialogue between the characters.<sup>61</sup> Isbrand speaks boldly in front of Siegfried, the only person who seems to be privy to his real identity,<sup>62</sup> though not to his plan of revenge,<sup>63</sup> unless this is another of Beddoes' oversights; and the very terms Isbrand uses should have convinced him much earlier that this is no zealous revolutionary working for the good of the state:

Fat mother moon hath brought the cats their light  
A whole thief's hour, and yet they are not met.  
I thought the bread and milky thick-spread lies,  
With which I plied them, would have drawn to head  
The state's bad humours quickly.

(III iii 27-31)

and, in a previous scene:

I hold the latch-string of a new world's wicket;  
One pull - and it rolls in.....

Tomorrow, Siegfried, shalt thou see me sitting  
One of the drivers of this racing earth,  
With Grüssau's reins between my fingers.  
(11 iv 6-15)

Beddoes uses dramatic irony to point the cosmic reality of Isbrand's aspiration compared to the appearance of his god-like omniscience in the confident boasts to the pilgrim who is the disguised Melveric.<sup>64</sup> The poet found irony a congenial mode, and in a play whose expressed purpose was to present a satire of cosmic proportions, its effectiveness is sometimes over-intellectual, yet often striking. The introduction of Mario to the conspiracy is a calculated action which can be illuminated by reference to the ideas on which A.W. Schlegel based his appreciation of Romantic Irony in dramatic practice.<sup>65</sup> Thus far Beddoes has presented Isbrand in such a manner that within the play he is acceptable and possibly even a potential tragic hero in the weakness he reveals. With Mario he creates, also within the play, criteria by which we judge and should come to condemn Isbrand. This is not the only form of Romantic Irony to be found in Death's Jest Book, but it is the dramatist's means of expressing a point of view which Schlegel found in the older English playwrights, and its effect is that of the irony of Friedrich Schlegel and Tieck. Once Beddoes has produced Mario, total commitment to Isbrand becomes impossible.

Mario is the incarnation of the spirit of liberty, drawn to Grüssau with the hope

To see one grave for foul oppression dug.  
(111 iii 142)

He is a republican; his ideal is the state where all men are equal and free from the tyranny of a man who is

no more than mortal. He recreates Rome and the assassination of Julius Caesar who held free men in thrall:

Down with him to the grave! Down with the god!  
(1.130)

He represents the stern unrelenting man of principle, the chosen instrument of Liberty, whose honour he will guard with "death to him that soils it".<sup>66</sup> Though we may suspect how Isbrand will react to the realisation of his revolutionary aspirations, total self-revelation is still to come, and Mario's introduction is more than mere irony of anticipation.<sup>67</sup>

Isbrand's motivation undergoes several changes in the course of Death's Jest Book. The first stage is the desire to avenge his father's death, but his preoccupation with hatred reveals to him motives previously unexpressed. Legitimate revenge no longer satisfies, and Melveric is no more than a focal point for Isbrand's more comprehensive misanthropy:

A sceptre is smooth handling, it is true,  
And one grows fat and jolly in a chair  
That has a kingdom crouching under it,  
With one's name on the collar, like a dog  
To fetch and carry. But in the heart I have  
Is a strange little snake. He drinks not wine  
When he'd be drunk, but poison: he doth fatten  
On bitter hate, not love. And oh, that duke!  
My life is hate of him!.....

(11 iv 22-30)

Each change within Isbrand gives the play a new emphasis and new disunity. He is a Satan, wishing to climb back into heaven, who discovers his true desire is to extend the dominion of darkness. He is the principle of death and negation; Mario is the principle of light, of just revolutionary instincts and ~~new~~ positive humanity.

The conflict between the concepts of power and lib-

erty thus established, Beddoes returns to other aspects of the plot: the scene culminating in the fratricide and the reunion of the spectre of Wolfram with Sibylla. All this seems anti-climax, but not only had Beddoes become involved with a number of threads; he was also conscious of the relationship between the development of a play and its technical divisions<sup>68</sup>: a rationalisation in fact of the natural organic development of the Elizabethan play, which before publication had no such artificial form. Act III closes with the "bold and unexpected invention" - the resurrection of Wolfram - and Act IV must conclude the Cain and Abel motif and pursue the "Romantic" death theme ~~xxxxxx~~ before "the final ~~xxxxxx~~ determination" is "taken, the step of Nemesis heard". The last six scenes are a unity and the "atonement" of all the complex details which precede.

The wedding feast which Adalmar was prepared to sacrifice to the demands of revolution<sup>69</sup> marks the moment of Isbrand's triumph, not over Melveric, for this has faded into insignificance, but over his fellow men. He realises his ambition to be "Death the Court-fool", for immediately he refers to "my brother King and Fool, / Friend Death"<sup>70</sup> and his thoughts dwell on a new and dangerous aspiration:

Now we're common,  
And man is tired of being no more than human;  
And I'll be something better.

(IV iv 188-190)

Entrenched in his new role as head of state, he looks not down upon his subjects but upwards, forgetting the mortal body that defines his limits. He feeds on prospects of power:

A king's a man, and I will be no man  
Unless I am a king.

(V i 35-6)

and,

It was ever  
My study to find out a way to godhead....  
What shall we add to man,  
To bring him higher? I begin to think  
That's a discovery I soon shall make.

(V i 47-64)

Meanwhile Nemesis is at hand, and Isbrand's tools are  
turning upon him in fear and hatred. Maric is patient:

Liberty....  
Melts tyrants down in time.

(V ii 37-9)

The banquet, scene iv of Act V, set among the ruins  
where formerly the conspirators met, marks the climax of  
both plot and ideas in Death's Jest Book. This is the  
traditional "blood-stained banquet" of the revenge play  
which Donner claims was imaginatively substituted or  
"modernised" by the Harpagus ballad of IV iv.<sup>71</sup> How-  
ever, this ballad is rather an evocation of the most  
horrible of all legendary revenges, with a history des-  
cending from Greek myth through Herodotus (whom Isbrand  
cites) and Seneca to the English playwrights. Of these,  
Marston not only quotes in Antonio's Revenge from Seneca's  
Thyestes but uses the same theme on stage.<sup>72</sup> Isbrand  
has revenge in mind when he sings it, but he only adds  
his own pastiche when he hears the signal that his plot  
has succeeded. Astyages' revenge has no parallel in  
Beddoes' play, nor is one intended; it is there, as  
Donner also concludes, for imaginative effect. This is  
the only course open to Beddoes at the moment of Isbrand's  
success, since the corpse-strewn banquet of Death's Jest  
Book must be not this one but the next.

Isbrand's new court, which assembles for the first and last time, is complete: it has a fool. Wolfram wears the cap and bells, donated by Melveric in mockery.<sup>73</sup> Fate is satisfied; Wolfram seeks a vengeance on Melveric which is legitimate as once Isbrand's was. As one resurrected he is Death's emissary, "Death the Court-fool" indeed. He has no need of Isbrand's bidding

Do justice to that cap

(V iv 48)

for he is all that Isbrand might or should have been, while Isbrand is a self-seeking tyrant. The cap and bells mark a temporal office which Beddoes uses to convey the symbolism of revenge: Wolfram jests and sings in a style which Isbrand acknowledges as his own, fitting himself chameleon-like to the role of jester as he had to that of knight. This contrast does not mark an inconsistency in character-drawing but rather the opposite. Wolfram is the instrument by which the moral order of the world of the revenge tragedy is re-established, and his likeness to Isbrand serves as a reminder of this, perhaps a necessary one after the long interval dominated by Isbrand's self-aggrandisement. He spares Isbrand from death by poison, thus ensuring that Isbrand's death will atone for his real sin.

Isbrand is stabbed by Mario and Beddoes thus acknowledges that though he understands and possibly even admires the qualities that make an Isbrand what he is, there are moral laws ~~which~~ which are even greater. Liberty is avenged; the misuse of power is condemned. Isbrand dies jesting, for though he can say almost at the last "King Death has asses' ears"<sup>74</sup> he comes to a final recognition of the supremacy of the gods:

I jest and sing and yet alas! am he,  
Who in a wicked masque would play the Devil;

But jealous Lucifer himself appeared,  
And bore him - whither? I shall know tomorrow,  
For now Death makes indeed a fool of me.  
(11. 281-5)

In this moment of clairvoyance his head bears for the last time the cap and bells, returned by Wolfram, ("Death sends you back this cap of office"<sup>75</sup>), which now betoken not divine but human folly in the cosmic perspective of the last scene. His death demonstrates the folly of the desire to transcend the human state, in his case a sin magnified by two others: disregard of filial duty and of human rights. One further episode is recorded in Death's jest-book. Athulf dies at Adalmar's funeral procession and the pattern of Wolfram's revenge is complete. He pronounces solemnly the execution of his task and carries Melveric alive into the violated tomb. The moral order is vindicated, and the curtain falls.

Death's Jest Book is a fugue in which, succeeding articulated, expanded, recapitulated, and finally all are blended in the climax. The key-note is Death, and like the signature of a musical composition it determines the nature and tone of the whole. It never recedes into the background: it is ever-present in the bass and the rest is meaningless without its unifying force. It is the major aspect of Beddoes' vision, and properly speaking, more than a theme. It represents the total orientation of the play.

The characters of Death's Jest Book move in a world whose physical confines are defined with geographical precision: North Africa, Ancona, Grüssau.<sup>76</sup> This means of location, like the play's date, is nothing more nor less than a superficial convenience. The characters,



arbitrarily placed in Grüssau at the end of the thirteenth century,<sup>77</sup> live within the perspective of death. They practise the religion of death. Death is the guiding force in their world, a subject of everyday speculation and parlance. It is not a simple matter to define the nature of this Death: Beddoes' point of view is essentially a personal one, and his expressed ideas of death go beyond those of Romanticism of his day;<sup>78</sup> and terms such as this may be misleading in any case. The nature of death and the other world in Romanticism tends to fall into two main categories: the concept of the daemonic, with its power to intervene in the lives of men of this world for good or evil, a theme found in writers such as Hoffmann, Grimm and the authors of the Schicksalstragödien; and the more specifically religious conception of death. In the case of Beddoes, only an examination of the play can determine his attitude. There is no viable comparison that can be made, for example, with Novalis's Hymnen an die Nacht. Novalis is jenseitig, to use the convenient German terminology: his vision is focused on a life beyond the grave ~~which~~ which gives this life its relative significance. Death represents an escape from life into the eternal. Beddoes too envisages a life beyond the grave, but his dead are not in "heaven". They inhabit a region which is an extension of life, drinking and making merry in a world which is the substance, and of which our daily existence is the unsatisfying, ~~hazy~~ and distorted shadow. His is an essentially diesseitig vision, since his dead are closer to the earthbound daemonic of German Romanticism. *Yes on the whole the dead don't wish to interfere with the living - he is compelled to.*

However, Beddoes' attitude is ambiguous, and this ambiguity arises from his own subjective view of the

problem of death. His is a unique view, a dynamic process representing an attempt to come to terms with the main theme of the play as he conceived it.

Initially, the poet's fear of death was so great and so inextricably linked with the fate of the body subject to the vagaries and indignities of uncontrollable outside forces that only proof of corporeal resurrection could appease it. Yet he presents death as the only valid existence, and life as Death's record of folly. As Donner says, "The dead must ridicule the living and show them up for fools and dupes of their own illusion."<sup>79</sup> Hence the play is a satire, and Death too is its target, man's idea of death which is as false as his idea of life. At this point it can be seen that Beddoes is determined to destroy all illusion, leaving no solution but despair. He conquered this despair, and his final acceptance of death comes close to the Romantic creed, in the extract from the speech on Brougham and in the play itself. The Brougham extract, however, has amazing affinities with an idea of the atheist Hume,<sup>80</sup> an instructive fact in itself. Yet at the time of beginning the first version of Death's Jest Book he still retained the views of the transitional period, and in the expression of the theme of death one finds the widest point of divergence between Beddoes' aspirations and his achievement.

The Beddoes who composed the verse letter of March 1826 to Bryan Waller Procter is the man whose hopes centred on the possibility of resurrection, which would confound both Death and man's idea of it. "For", he writes,

death is more 'a jest' than life: you see  
Contempt grows quick from familiarity.

He is whistling in a graveyard, rationalising, for familiarity with Anatomy brought no easy solution, but instead the death of his hopes. The problem of death remained in the realm of ideas, as an intellectual problem which could only be solved by philosophy. In the finished play the resurrection of Wolfram is only effective as an artistic device for this reason. Yet the play survived the crisis and contains an extremely comprehensive range of attitudes to death in a philosophical, or non-religious, context. The one fault is that Beddoes could not see clearly enough: he went too far into the problem yet not far enough to find ultimate satisfaction. There is a rich complex of ideas, but the single positive statement is equivocal, and makes no allowance for the original problem.

Death is a fact. It is man's task to assume and express a point of view in relation to this fact, which is incontrovertible, as Beddoes soon found. Mythology and religion furnish a guide to possible attitudes: on the one hand Eastern religion presents a path through death to self-perfection and Nirvana, while on the other extreme is the underworld of the Greeks with its physical characteristics and a ruler who had been known to permit the return of the dead to the world above. Neither of these views appealed to Beddoes, though an echo of the second is to be found in his play, nor did the Christian view prevailing in the Western world with its devaluation of the physical body and ~~its implications~~ a view of death with implications dangerous to the incomplete rationalist.

The Christian ethos plays no part in the tragedy of the Elizabethans and the Jacobean, for it is incompatible with the tragic sense inherited from the Greeks.

English tragedy partakes of a cosmopolitan mythology and its universe abides by older and sterner moral laws.

Death's Jest Book is no exception, for this reason and others.

For a writer like Beddoes, living in an age where science and scepticism had apparently outstripped or devalued the process of evolution of religious thought, the question of death presented the most desperate of problems. The ethic by which his community existed was one he found he could not accept, and there was no alternative. In his isolated position he could only approach death empirically, as an existential question. Death's Jest Book represents his attempts to formulate some sort of belief while he was divorced from the saving power of unconditional faith; unlike Pascal's libertines, he was unwilling to make le pari, unless the fact that he called in a pastor at his end shows a last weakening. If his death were suicidal, the occasion would be the final test of the committed rationalist. This Beddoes was not. Society had passed through the Age of Enlightenment and was immersed in the modern world of science and socialism, and to balance this, of renewed religious fervour. Beddoes the poet of death was the victim of the modern duality, and his solution was a compromise. Where reason failed him, he looked into the realms of fantasy and imagination. In this he was undoubtedly a Romantic. The term has many applications and definitions which conflict one with another, but the undeniable essence of Romanticism is the search for one's own self outside the confines of society, but in relation to the cosmos.

One must turn to the play to find the position Beddoes adopted, more in hope than in satisfaction. Neither the constant irony nor the archaic ~~mythic~~ elem-

ents of Death's Jest Book detract from the actuality with which Beddoes viewed this central aspect. To a certain extent he plays with moods, themes, attitudes, in an attempt to define his ideas and explore the relationship of death to man. Nor does he hesitate to posit the relationship of death to man.

In the early works, Beddoes approaches death with an unresolved ambivalence of idea of which Death's Jest Book is the ultimate statement. The Brides' Tragedy and Dianeme's Death Scene present a death that is positive in its way: the gateway to a union in and with the cosmos. In "Dream of Dying" and "Lines Written at Geneva" he expresses the immediate physical horror of death. Between the two poles of experience comes the fragment "Death Sweet", with its escapist theme:

Is it not sweet to die? for, what is death  
But sighing that we might never sigh again,  
Getting a length beyond our tedious selves  
..... Turning to daisies gently in the grave.

Extremes of attitude: the wish for death and the horror of death; the imagination and the morbid fantasy. The treatment of the theme in Death's Jest Book embraces and discards these earlier attitudes as Beddoes thinks his way towards his final standpoint. Having discarded science and faith, he placed all his confidence in philosophy.

His outlook appears misanthropic when he views death and the world. Isbrand speaks with Siegfried in the cathedral ruins as they drink a toast to the gods:

The old gods  
Were only men and wine.  
- Here's to their memory.  
They're dead, poor sinners, all of them but Death.  
(lll lll 378-80)

Beddoes' characters share his own conviction, that there is no god but Death, and the play is his testament. Such is Beddoes' view that the world is no longer capable of rejuvenation. "Old", "worn out": these are the adjectives he employs through his protagonists.

But Death is old and half worn out:  
Are there no chinks in 't?

(III III 244-5)

The hard old rocky world

(IV II 49)

Thou art old, world,  
A hoary atheistic murderous star:  
I wish that thou would'st die, or could'st be slain.  
(II III, deleted passage, Works?  
p.413)

The characters of the play are emanations of a single idea: death. The earth and death exist in constant interrelation:

.... earth (that's the grave's sky)  
(II IV 55)

The least original in conception of all the characters is Sibylla. She has never truly been alive;<sup>81</sup> her one thought is to die and be reunited with Wolfram. Beddoes' emendations attempt to endow her with a more positive function, but she remains little more than a puppet. For four acts she makes an extensive and spasmodically seen preparation for death. She is the incarnation of the death-wish, seeing not flowers, but the token of the beauty of death,<sup>82</sup> and the resurrected Wolfram has no power to persuade her from her course.<sup>83</sup> She passes from half-life to death. Of all Beddoes' characters, she and Ziba are closest to being traditionally Romantic figures.

The Arab Ziba is the messenger of the occult, in Ziba

many ways the counterpart of Mario. They are two figures from past ages wandering through the world to fulfil their appointed tasks.<sup>84</sup> Ziba's origins are mysterious: he is the child of death, and privy to its secrets, the distiller of deadly poisons. States of suspended animation, dreams, trances, drug-induced states were prized by the Romantics as granting a foretaste of the desired eternal. Thus Ziba:

Sleeping or feigning sleep,  
Well done of her: 'tis trying on a garb  
Which she must wear, sooner or later, long:  
'Tis but a wafmer lighter death.  
(l ii 28-31, c)

The obverse of this is Isbrand's astringent

I never sleep o' nights: the black sky likes me,  
And the soul's solitude, while half mankind  
Lies in earth's quiet shade, rehearsing death.  
(lll iii 287-9)

Ziba has unshaken faith in immortality. Man and nature are part of a continuous universe in his eyes, so that a plant may be "born anew out of a seed"<sup>85</sup> while man is but the seed of a ghost. The pseudo-scientific basis for this analogy is formed by the bone Luz of Hebrew mythology, out of which man is resurrected. This was the bone Beddoes had failed to find in his anatomical researches, consigning the theory to the realm of myth from which Ziba arose. Ziba does in fact resurrect Wolfram by means of his magic, but as will be seen, Wolfram is not unwilling to be brought back to earth. The implications of the suggestion that resurrection is possible are expressed by Melveric:

He who dares to think that words of human speech,  
A chalky ring with monstrous figures in it,  
Or smoky flames can draw the distant souls  
Of those whose bones and monuments are dust

Must shudder at the restless broken death  
Which he himself in age shall fall into.  
(111 iii 404-c) 86

Ziba performs the act of resurrection, however, only at Melveric's request, though also to prove he has the power.<sup>87</sup> His real view of death approximates to Isbrand's in the "Murderer's Haunted Couch" fragment: that it is a privilege. Adalmar expresses the same sentiments when he discovers that Athulf has swallowed Ziba's poison in an attempt to commit suicide:

Thou hast stolen  
The right of the deserving good old man  
To rest, his cheerful labour being done...  
(1V iii 115-7)

And Athulf, repenting his action, is scorned by Ziba in these terms:

Why, think you that I'd deal a benefit  
So precious to the noble as is death,  
To such a pampered darling of delight  
As he that shivers there? O, not for him  
Blooms my dark Nightshade....  
Nor lets the poppy her leaves fall for him.  
To heroes such are sacred. He may live,  
As long as 'tis the Gout and Dropsy's pleasure.  
(1V iii 317-326)

In reality Beddoes had no more faith in Ziba than in Luz; the Moor is a figure of fantasy who serves the plot with his conjuring and adds another voice to the antiphony of death. His introduction brought Beddoes no closer to formulating the real nature of death. In his depiction of the contrasting figures of Isbrand and Wolfram, however, he comes closer to the central problem with an imaginative appraisal. It is abundantly clear that Beddoes incorporated into the play for the sake of richness and depth views of death he had already rejected, since it was a play and not purely a



personal document. Through the two brothers he discards the superrational for the philosophical-speculative approach, in Isbrand's case interwoven with mythological overtones.

Isbrand is close to Beddoes' heart: so much is demonstrated by his portrayal and, paradoxically, in the manner in which he is betrayed. Beddoes projects into the character a certain measure of his own desire for fame and recognition in this life, to be "more than man". Isbrand is forced to bow his head to the sovereignty of death, but he does this uniquely. He has no wish to be dead, no fondness for the state of sleep, while he acknowledges death as the only absolute:

So should every honest man be: cold, dead and leaden-coffined. This [Wolfram] was one who would be in friendship constant, and the pole wanders: one who would be immortal, and the light that shines on his pale forehead now.... undulated from its star hundreds of years ago. That is constancy, that is life. O moral nature!

(11 ii 87-92)

Isbrand sees the possibility of fulfilment within the finite world, whose relationship to the world of the dead he speculates upon in two dialogues with his fellow conspirator Siegfried. In the first, Siegfried poses the question that obsessed Beddoes; Isbrand gives the answer Beddoes half hoped could be his own:

What know we  
Of Death's commandments to his subject-spirits  
Who are as yet the body's citizens?.....  
- Tower and roll what may,  
There have been goblins bold who have stolen (passports,  
Or sailed the sea, or leaped the wall, or flung  
The drawbridge down and travelled back again.  
So would my soul have done.

(11 iv 62-71)

Y Note, too, the implication of Siegfried's words: that

Death has only lent the soul, or ghost, to the body, and that he reclaims his own. Death is an unseen participant in the action, no abstract, but a real and powerful deity to whom Isbrand grants the crown of folly in a moment of mockery because he

.... has killed the best knight I knew, Sir Wolfram.  
(11 11 111-2)

Within the play Isbrand relativises death, making him at the most the ruler of another kingdom of equal status. In the dialogue with Siegfried of Act 111 scene 111 he takes up this idea, though without the mockery of 11 11 or 1V iv 168-9:

Methinks that earth and heaven are grown bad  
(neighbours,  
And have blocked up the common door between them.  
Five hundred years ago had we sat here  
So late and lonely, many a jolly ghost  
Would have joined company.  
(11. 384-8)

Siegfried's answer concludes,

The dead are most and merriest: so be sure  
There will be no more haunting till their towns  
Are full to the garret; then they'll shut their  
(gates,  
To keep the living out, and perhaps leave  
A dead or two between both kingdoms.  
(11. 396-400)

Isbrand envisages nostalgically a world of eternally feasting dead, and denies that he would leave his "wine or subterranean love" at the bidding of a necromant.<sup>88</sup> His kingdom of death preserves the same animal hierarchy where the "goblins" of dead men feed on the spirits of dead beasts.<sup>89</sup> The only difference between the two kingdoms is that the dead are free from the restrictions of the conventional bourgeois mores Beddoes so despised; the imaginary world of "five hundred years ago" that

Isbrand conjures up is obviously that of his own dream, one in which death is no problem to dead or living. Yet Isbrand himself is content, with a dukedom within his grasp; more than content, since he will be a greater king than Death, whom as usurping tyrant he calls "brother King and Fool!"<sup>60</sup> He dies a victim of this "jealous Lucifer", and Death rules supreme over the close of the play. In view of the number of deaths in the last scene, Wolfram's words would seem to bear an ironic significance:

....'tis the season  
When you may celebrate Death's Harvest-Home.  
(V iv 297-8)

Through Isbrand Beddoes expresses at first a nostalgic view of death, evoking a world where ghosts walked and men could believe in them. The extent to which he was really committed to this is betrayed by his portrayal of Mandrake in the second and third acts, a tour de force of what may properly be called Romantic Irony, and as such will be discussed in the following section.<sup>91</sup>

The most important figure in Beddoes' presentation of death is that of the sole revenant, Wolfram. In Wolfram's lines he makes the most vital statements of his beliefs, disguising them thinly as irony in places - but as a cosmic irony - and linking them with an older tradition which unified to a large extent the Christian and the daemonic views of the world beyond the grave.

Wolfram dead or dying is a more interesting person than Wolfram the "parfit gentil knight" of most of Act 1. In the revised Act 1 in particular he is a deliberate contrast to Isbrand: Christian charity and unchristian vengeance. Nor does the rest of the play resolve the rights and wrongs of these attitudes, though Isbrand could be seen as a psychologically truthful depiction of a

revenger. <sup>Wol</sup>Wolfram resurrected takes over the viewpoint of his brother, but for the right reason, while Isbrand follows his real bent. Wolfram's portrayal is not inconsistent. He expresses his attitude to death early in Act 1 as follows:

Open me any grave that earth can spare,  
Leave me the truth of love, and death is lovely.  
(1 i 266-7, c)

At the moment of death his transformation occurs, for this truth has betrayed him. Thus the change in his outlook is not arbitrary,<sup>92</sup> not a mere convenience to ensure the right denouement. Again, Beddoes provides a second betrayal of trust in allowing Wolfram to rescue Melveric when he knows he has attempted to poison him. So Wolfram dies, recognising the justness of Isbrand's distrust.<sup>93</sup> He accepts his fate, not passively, but reaffirming his decision to keep silence and seek vengeance himself thereafter:

I will avenge me, duke, as never ~~any~~ man.

(Song From the Waters)

As sudden thunder  
Pierces night....  
Our ghost, our corpse and we  
Rise to be.

(1 iv 203-211)

With Wolfram, Beddoes expresses most nearly a true poetic vision; the sentiments and attitudes to death which in his other characters seem artificial or grotesquely fanciful have a sense of reality. The fake conjuring dissatisfied Beddoes the scientist, but not Beddoes the artist, and it is acceptable. The resurrected Wolfram is no psychic projection of the duke's guilt. Modern criticism interprets in this way the ghosts of Banquo and of Hamlet's father, but Wolfram is a bold invention,

a man of flesh and blood. He is two things at the same time: in occult terms, a spirit kept earthbound by its need to accomplish a mission in this world - like that of Hamlet's father - who re-establishes contact with the living; and a figure whose resurrection is real, so that he is visible to all (unlike the ghost of Banquo)<sup>94</sup> and solid to the touch.<sup>95</sup> In 1831 Beddoes transmitted to Aelsall the suggestion that he might leave the resurrection till Act V, and that he should have no contact with the living. This would have objectivised the whole affair of the resurrection in a more "Shakespearian" manner, making Wolfram more of an idea and less of a living participant in the action, but the change was never made, and Wolfram as he is is no symbol, no guilt-conjured spectre, but a man returned from the grave.

As such, he is Death's emissary, and the only character to move freely between the two worlds. He has "messages" for the living, pronouncements on the attitude of Death and the dead to them. His words to Melfric, "I am no friend, no foe"<sup>96</sup> are essentially true, for he is no longer himself, but the instrument of the moral laws of nature, of the spirit of retribution.<sup>97</sup> In the scene with Sibylla, IV ii, he gives a new view of death in the cosmic order of things. She is not ready to die, for she has not yet experienced how to live, though death is a state of peace:

the place where sighs are not;  
A shore of blessing....

(IV ii 33-4)

Wolfram expresses a profound pity at the idea that she should do no more in the world than cause his own death and then die. He apostrophises Death as "Snake Death", insinuating, but "craggy" jawed and "coffin tongued": a false picture of security to those like Sibylla who do

not need to die to find release and fulfilment; an abyss. This is Death. The dead are otherwise, and the distinction was a valid one to Beddoes:

The dead are ever good and innocent,  
And love the living. They are cheerful creatures,  
And quiet as sunbeams, and most like,  
In grace and patient love and spotless beauty,  
The new-born of mankind.

(1V ii 112-6)

Beddoes is saying, in effect, that there is no such thing as the ~~daemonic~~. The kingdom of the dead is the kingdom of heaven, and there is no hell. <sup>supra for heaven</sup> Thus, as Isbrand has already suggested, there are two states of existence, death and life. On the other hand, this vision largely suppresses the physical realities which were the original inspiration of Beddoes' quest, only the distinction between death and the dead hinting at them. In Wolfram's lines he expresses a creed which is consistent with his later attitudes, those of 1830 or later. The question of resurrection may be left aside, and that of physical corruption discounted. Beddoes had conquered the second obsession and as far as the first was concerned, he was aware that he retained it only as an artistic device.

Out of death lead no ways,  
he was to write in "Dream Pedlary", and Wolfram was allowed to find one only to be able to present the other side of the picture and confirm Beddoes' instinctive feelings.

Wolfram makes his final appearance in Act V scene iv, the last of the play. Dressed as jester, he regales the members of his audience with the type of ditty they were accustomed to hear from the previous incumbent, Isbrand, and who speaks the same misanthropic sentiments.<sup>98</sup> For

all that, he is still himself, and having saved Isbrand from the wrong death, he sets about to restore the mood proper to the feast, and gives himself away:

I'll begin a story.  
As I was newly dead and sat beside  
My corpse, looking on it...  
- But how came you to die and yet be here?  
(V iv 197-203)

X

Wolfram's reply embraces the whole of Beddoes' belief. Touched by Romanticism, it is nevertheless more consistent with his own personal view as he has gradually revealed it throughout the play:

Did I say so? Excuse me. I am absent  
And forget always that I'm just now living.  
But dead and living, which are which? A question  
Not easy to be solved. Are you alone, ~~men~~  
Men, as you're called, monopolists of life?  
Or is all being, living? And what is  
With less of toil or trouble, more alive  
Than they, who cannot, half a day, exist  
Without repairing their flesh mechanism?  
Or do you owe your life, not to this body,  
But to the sparks of spirit that fly off,  
Each instant disengaged and hurrying  
From little particles of flesh that die?  
If so, perhaps you are the dead yourselves,  
And these ridiculous figures on the wall  
Laugh, in their safe existence, at the prejudice,  
That you are anything like living beings.  
(11. 204-220)

This is a long speech, and stands unanswered; a typical Beddoesian trick: not dialogue, but dialectic. The chief target of the play's satire is man's idea of death and his over-emphasis on life which he orders according to laws and governments and morality, regimenting nothing but bodies, while the living aspect of man is not this body, which decays, but the spirit; in Wolfram's terms an immanent life-force which is only intact in the dead. Wolfram's riddle reduces even

Iebrand to the stature of a butt of the satire; Mario reduces him to the level of an evil creature. So man stands condemned in Beddoes' eyes, with the sole proviso that the man who works for the good of his fellows on earth is partially exempt from scorn. The only reservation Beddoes must make is that all men die, good or bad, and since he posits no hell but earth, his vision is essentially confused. One point is clear: that he no longer allows philosophic validity to the pantheism of Hesperus's vision. Rather the body is inessential. The feasting dancing dead are in a complete state of happiness because they are united with the soul of the universe from which the body precluded them; death re-integrates the disintegrating spirit. Melveric's fate is the worst of all, for Death takes him alive, adding a symbolic dimension to Wolfram's question.

To conclude the action, Beddoes provides

The antimasque,  
I think they call it; 'tis satirical.

(ll. 299-300)

The antimasque consists of the funeral of one and the death of the other of the duke's two sons, the death of Amala, and Melveric's own transportation by Wolfram. The Dance of Death introduces it and Wolfram hovers over it as presiding genius. The antimasque continues and concludes the masque, yet it is separate, for it contains the working out of Wolfram's own personal revenge, while Mario's vengeance on Iebrand belongs to the masque. The masque justifies the moral world of the living, or the spirit of liberty, the antimasque the world of the dead, the cosmic, or the spirit of Nemesis.

Wolfram's reference to "these ridiculous figures on the wall" introduces one final consideration in the



interpretation of the theme of death in Beddoes' play. They constitute the painted Dance of Death on the ruined wall of the cathedral. Beddoes' interest in the Dance of Death, the Danse Macabre or the Totentanz, is not restricted to atmospheric or "period" window-dressing. The title page of the c version of Death's Jest Book bears instead of the original Greek quotations the lines

Down from the Alps Paracelsus came  
To dance with Death at Basel.

These represent the two main elements of the play. Paracelsus suggests alchemy, and implies the scientific spirit of enquiry, and the Dance of Death at Basel and in all Europe the medieval conception of Death which in many of its elements was not so far removed from the daemonic of the Romantics. The daemonic in post-Renaissance times tends to be earthbound, diessseitig and unchristian, whereas the <sup>r</sup>orthodox Christian attitude of the Dance of Death incorporates these very features. When Beddoes refers to a past age where the dead returned to the living, he may not have been evoking the Dance of Death, but this is its essence. So too is the message in Wolfram's words

But dead and living, which are which?

The Dance of Death varies in form and degree of sophistication, but the theme is always the same. The dead appear on earth to speak with the living and warn them against evil: in the service of the Christian clergy, therefore. They are more than ghost, if less than human, and they have a specific task to perform. Theirs is the only real existence. Secular medieval literature knew the tradition; we may take as an example Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale. In Death's Jest Book Beddoes returns to a tradition where Christianity itself had not closed

the gates between the worlds of living and dead, an age of integrated consciousness to which other Romantics looked, and he turns it to philosophic account. In his study of the Dance of Death, L.H.Kurtz<sup>cc</sup> devotes a page or so to Beddoes, acknowledging his place as a modern exponent of the tradition. It was one which satisfied Beddoes' artistic side, and theologically it could be applied to his own doctrine. The Deaths of Act V visualise man from their point of view and make a moral judgment which is peculiarly their own:

Methinks I can hear  
Living skeletons come  
....For the wicked are coming who have not yet died.  
(11.29-30;38)

Beddoes includes one further traditional aspect, that which inspired critics<sup>100</sup> to a political interpretation of the play, the dead representing the Marxian view of the world order. This is the theme of Death the Leveler, medieval itself, in fact an inherent part of the medieval outlook and a corrective to the social conditions of the time:

The emperor and empress, the king and the queen,  
The knight and the abbot, friar fat, friar thin,  
The gipsy and beggar are met on the green.  
(V iv 19-21)

Extant texts of the Dance of Death include in many cases the social hierarchy which Beddoes suggests in these lines. In the play, Wolfram is the mediator between the painted deaths and what they stand for, and the world of those who claim the title of the "living", a title Beddoes questions in the concluding scene of the play, and, as Kurtz attempts to point out, in Act 1, scene 1, lines 306-310 of the c version only.

Death's Jest Book, called by Beddoes a satire, is profuse and confused in theme, wordy, and an omnibus of philosophical jottings or, as Gregory calls it,<sup>101</sup> "a collection of poems embodying a central theme", allotted to a large number of characters and acted out within the technical divisions of a five act drama. Beddoes is constantly torn between the objective form and the subjective content, between what he ought to say and what he wishes to say. In the last analysis the play resolves itself into the single line which bespeaks all the poet's hopes and fears and beliefs in seven words:

But dead and living, which are which?

Through the medium of his plot Beddoes presents a moral view, confused though it might be by the presence of Isbrand; his own philosophical point is made clear, and this is it. The moral view represents an attempt to come to terms with what is called life by those who are not yet dead. } Grete Moldauer's title for her chapter on the play poses a vital question: Main Work or Best Work? It seems clear that Beddoes' entire work is a unified and dynamic whole, and Death's Jest Book is no more and no less than the largest and ideologically the most central part of it. The play is inseparable from the writer, and for this reason it is difficult to make any final and objective judgment.

### Notes

- 1     Lytton Strachey, The Last Elizabethan, Books and Characters, London, Phoenix Library, 1929)
- 2     The implications of this term are included in the discussion of the play, Part One above.

- 3 See note 17 to Part One.
- 4 Beddoes: The Mask of Farody, Hudson Review  
vol. VI, 1953, p.254.
- 5 Barnette Miller, op. cit., p.324. The present  
writer does not know whether this idea (that  
Melveric himself had formerly been court  
jester and that Isbrand's assumption of this  
disguise repeats former events) derives from  
an earlier source to which she has no access.  
In any case it is an unnecessary and un-  
likely critical assumption.
- 6 Two versions exist: in one, the jester,  
taunted beyond endurance by the young prince,  
killed him with a thrown tile, in the other  
with a dagger. See Donner, Works, pp.712-4.
- 7 There is no indication which is the elder, i.e.  
most directly affected by Melveric's usurp-  
ation.
- 8 It must be noted that Isbrand had no way of  
knowing the duke was responsible for his  
brother's death, though he added to the extent  
of his vengeance by inciting the duke's sons  
to murder over a woman. Beddoes may have  
been aware of this inconsistency, for in the c  
version he makes Isbrand refer to a wronged  
sister (1 i 195-6). Her name, Atropa, also  
occurs in the list of persons represented of  
the c version.
- 9 Cf. Atheist's, Revenger's, Second Maiden's  
Tragedies.
- 10 Testimony of Kelsall's Memoir.
- 11 Evidence of his own timetable; see p.28 above.
- 12 These include the names of characters, indiv-  
idual lines, and themes, and also the con-  
ception and character of Ziba which was trans-  
ferred from the abortive LAF to DJB.
- 13 Op. cit., p.122.
- 14 Ibid, p.168.
- 15 See note 1 to Introduction and note 85 to Part  
One.

Cf. also the remark of Henry Bedd<sup>o</sup>es, letter to Kelsall, July 8th 1850, Br. Box, pp.45-6: "I was glad to find the Mandrake so much suppressed. It was a character which my brother delighted in long ago when a boy, and the idea I can imagine ever haunted his imagination."

On this point, see Part Three C p.170 below.

- 16 But this would be unnecessary - see discussion of Dramatic Irony, Part Three A below.
- 17 Letter to Kelsall, April 1st.
- 18 Cf. the attitudes of Isbrand and Ziba to sleep and death, p.93f. below.
- 19 Thomas Lovell Beddoes, London Mercury vol. ix no. 50, December 1923, pp.163-174.
- 20 Letter to Kelsall, February 27th 1829.
- 21 Letter to Kelsall, April 30th 1829.
- 22 Letter to Kelsall, January 10th 1831.
- 23 Cf. also Antonio's Revenge, 111 ii; however Antonio's motive is simply to add to the extent of his revenge on Fiero.
- 24 These lines in the original text follow 11 ii 34, "which was in this world". See footnote to 11 ii, Works, p.398.
- 25 Fragment XXVlll in Donner's edition of 1950; see footnote to 1935 ed. of Works, p.399.
- 26 "The New Cecilia" and "The Oviparous Tailor".
- 27 See Part Three sections A and D below.
- 28 February 27th 1829.
- 29 l. 15, a text; l.18, c text. The homunculus or manikin was an obscene human-like figure fashioned by the medieval occultist in an attempt to create life.
- 30 TLB, p.360.

- 31 Manrake does in fact indulge in satire in l iv, l.59f. and in lll iii; but in the scene with Isbrand Beddoes is at pains to preserve the contrast. See also the discussion of the c text in Part Three D below.
- 32 DJB, V i 38-9.
- 33 Donner gives examples in TLB, Chapter Vlll.
- 34 Cf. his propensity for practical joking; the episode of the burning of a seat at Drury Lane in 1846 is the ultimate example of this form of protest, which it seems to have been.
- 35 F. 63 above.
- 36 References to Marston's text are based on the edition in the Blackfriars Dramatists series, Oliver and Boyd, London and Edinburgh, 1934, Vol. 1.
- 37 llll i 29-31.
- 38 l i 167-9, b version; deleted from c.
- 39 No actual source books can be quoted for this, which is, however, a recognised fact. The best reference seems to be the preface to the Every-<sup>face &</sup> man edition of Dostoevsky's Idiot, which gives <sup>key, for</sup> a modern interpretation of the theme. It is <sup>& pattern</sup> an integral part of many folk dramas, some of <sup>& identification</sup> which persisted into the 19th century in <sup>cf. Lear &</sup> Shropshire, the county of Beddoes' youth. This <sup>old Eur. drama</sup> is not to suggest a link, for Beddoes must in any case have been aware of the implications of the Fool which were partly transferred to the Court Fool; Marston certainly was.
- 40 This is Lear, the only Shakespearian tragedy to contain a fool.
- 41 If the passage is to make sense, the word "fool" must be taken in apposition to "sign", and "'s" is therefore short for is. This does not resolve all the difficulties of interpretation of the song, however.
- 42 Cf. ll.70-75 of the text.

- 43 Although Professor Donner claims that his interpretation and mine are not incompatible, I find it hard to agree with his claim that the message of the "Spirit of Folly" passage is "There must be no more submission to falsehood, and folly must cease to play second fiddle in the orchestra of life". (TLB, p. 360-1). This is the implication, but it is not what is stated in the fragment.
- 44 Note 8 above.
- 45 I. 64 above.
- 46 The depiction of the development of Isbrand's character, particularly in the early stages of the play, is an excellent study in abnormal psychology - excellent in that it is true to the nature and manner of the changes which occur in the motivation of such a character.
- 47 Cf. letter to Kelsall, January 10th 1831; and DJB V iv 348-50.
- 48 Litter Blaubart, l i. See Part Three C below.
- 49 Cf. III iii 311f. and elsewhere.
- 50 Examples of this are numerous; from Shakespeare, Henry IV, Julius Caesar; Otway's Venice Preserv'd; from the Germans of the period, immediately preceding the Romantic, Goethe's Götz, Schiller's Die Räuber, Fiesko, Wallenstein.
- 51 Cf. DJB l i 316.
- 52 Donner, TLB, p.221.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 V iv 349-50.
- 55 Cf. DJB II iv.
- 56 TLB, p.235.
- 57 There is also a great deal in him of the type of the Byronic hero whose literary ancestor is Milton's Satan as described by Marie Fraz in The Romantic Agony, Chapter 2.

- 58 Cf. for example the setting of Goethe's Iphigenia in Tauris, another philosophical drama in an older convention.
- 59 Cf. Beddoes' letter of January 10th 1831.
- 60 Cf. 11 iv 11.1f.
- 61 For example the dialogue on the nature of death; see p.96 below.
- 62 11 ii 82.
- 63 11 iv 35f.
- 64 111 iii 72-99.
- 65 Vorlesungen über dramatische Literatur und Kunst, Lecture XXVII.
- 66 111 iii 149.
- 67 For the use of this type of irony, cf. 1 ii 162-4, c version = b 11.130-132.
- 68 See opening section of letter to Kelsall of January 10th 1831. The quotations below are from this letter and express Beddoes' own ideas.
- 69 1V i 85-7. There is an irony in this, as Isbrand does not know how the wedding has ended: cf. 1V iv 26.
- 70 1V iv 168-9
- 71 TLE, pp. 220-1.
- 72 It was not unknown in Beddoes' time: cf. Keats' poem on an old theme, Isabella.
- 73 Cf. 1V i 42.
- 74 V iv 245.
- 75 V iv 271.
- 76 The last is not to be found on a modern ~~map~~ map, but its existence was undoubted.



- 77 This is Beddoes' time; Flögel gives it more precisely as c.1377.
- 78 The term is used in adherence with the canons of Arthur O. Lovejoy (On the Discriminations of Romanticism, English Romantic Poets, ed. T.H. Abrams, Oxford University Press, New York 1960) unless otherwise stated. Lovejoy writes, "There is a movement which began in Germany in the 1790's - the only one which has an indisputable title to be called Romanticism, since it invented the title for its own use."
- 79 TLB, p.214.
- 80 Cf. Weber, op. cit., p.216.
- 81 Cf. l ii 94-99, c version; b 70-75.
- 82 V iii 36-48.
- 83 IV ii; see pp.99-100 below.
- 84 The Wandering Jew figure was beloved of the Romantics. Mario's origins are clear enough; for Ziba's see DJB lll iii 489f. and footnote Works p.437, and also LAF, Fragment IV - he is a legacy from this play.
- 85 lll iii 443.
- 86 The expression "broken death" recalls "broken sleep" - an interesting transference of ideas. Cf. also Wolfram, "Who breaks my death?" lll iii
- 87 Cf. lll iii 411f. (560.
- 88 lll iii 410-415.
- 89 lll iii 460-1.
- 90 IV iv 168.
- 91 Part Three A below, pp. 142f.
- 92 The revisions of the c version make this clearer; the pertinent quotations from l iv are all from this text.
- 93 At this point, and in the c version only, Melveric consciously acknowledges and assumes the full weight of his treachery, claiming the

status of the great sinner, another Romantic figure discussed by Praz, *op. cit.* Whether Beddoes would have continued revising Melveric along these lines presents an interesting subject for speculation.

- 94      IV i 32f.
- 95      III iii 662.
- 96      IV i 54.
- 97      Cf. V iv 348.
- 98      L. 79f. and the song, "Old Adam".
- 99      The Dance of Death and the Macabre Spirit in European Literature, Columbia University Press, 1934. Apparently the only available source book, more concerned with documentation than appreciation. For DJB, see pp. 175-6.
- 100     Primarily Geoffrey Wagner, Horizon, vol. xix June 1947. Horace Gregory also gives a socialist interpretation of "Mario" in A Poet Resurrected, New Republic, July 1936.
- 101     *ibid.*

### Part Three

#### BEDDOES AND THE GERMANS

At the time of writing Death's Jest Book, Beddoes was broadening his knowledge of a new literature: the German, evaluating and discussing many of his new discoveries in his letters.<sup>1</sup> His youthful and adolescent works show in many of their aspects the influence of what he read, and this predisposition remained with him into his maturity. Death's Jest Book itself is full of reminiscences of English dramatists,<sup>2</sup> and though it was written in Germany the echoes of German tradition are mainly of a different kind. Beddoes was no longer seeking a form, or phrases to express his content, but, as has been demonstrated, an approach to the fundamental problems of life. Death's Jest Book is a play of ideas, the product of a speculative intellect which took to itself the elements of German thought to which it felt akin.

This in fact is a satisfactory definition of what constitutes "influence".<sup>3</sup> Beddoes' own preoccupations and his changing aims led him to take from the Germans exactly what he did and no more. Death's Jest Book is basically an English play, and not only by virtue of the language in which it is written; Beddoes was steeped in English literary tradition, hence his con-

scious or unconscious reminiscences of Elizabethan or Jacobean playwrights. On the other hand, it is a play whose creator was living in Germany, studying and assimilating German literature and thought, a fact which contributed to the finished play in various ways. As a play of ideas, Death's Jest Book contains evidence of the influence of German literary theory, of philosophic thought, of Beddoes' German readings, and on occasions of the German language itself.

Death's Jest Book must ultimately face judgment as an English play, yet an examination of the German influences outlined above, in particular the first, provides an interesting study of the nature and extent to which Beddoes, a non-German who had already written prolifically, was prone to influence by a new cultural environment in the writing of a work whose main theme was already formulated on his arrival in Germany in 1825.

A. Irony, Dramatic and Romantic, in Death's Jest Book

While composing Death's Jest Book, Beddoes became acquainted with the works of Ludwig Tieck which made use of the doctrine of Romantic Irony formulated but not practised by Friedrich Schlegel.<sup>4</sup> He saw its potential for enabling him to carry out the necessary reshaping of play into some sort of philosophic statement in accordance with the essential purpose of Romantic Irony while maintaining his original intention of writing a satire.

Romantic Irony, however, is only one form of irony, and Beddoes was already familiar with another: the irony of the Greek dramatists and Shakespeare most conveniently known as Tragic or Dramatic Irony.<sup>5</sup> These two types of

irony, while differing in their manifestation, derive alike from a single source, since they develop in different directions from the irony employed by Socrates; their difference is in kind, not in the underlying insight they imply. The irony of Socrates, displaying itself overtly in "pretended modesty"<sup>6</sup> or self-depression or understatement for a specific purpose, was more than these things. From the philosophical attitude which so displayed itself the twin forms developed, Romantic Irony to all intents and purposes not until the last years of the eighteenth century, Dramatic Irony in the plays of the Greeks themselves, thus passing into dramatic tradition. Irony as Socrates conceived and practised it was a mode of behaviour, a pervasive attitude implying a particular view of the world and truth. The critic G.G.Sedgwick<sup>7</sup> offers as a definition of the aim of the Socratic method:

It is a war upon Appearance waged by a man who knows Reality: now it is a process deadly to empty pretence, now a sort of kindly pruning vital to growth in truth.

The ironic viewpoint therefore embraces an omniscient attitude: a knowledge of the incongruity of appearance and reality. It provides a means of synthesising or alternately of underlining the contrast between the two. The synthesising power ~~of~~ with its corresponding need for self-detachment is the basic aspect of Romantic Irony, while Dramatic or Tragic Irony depends upon the perceptible incongruity of real and apparent.] The dramatist and at his behest the spectator partake of the omniscient viewpoint, but the actors do not. In theory, it will be seen, the two types seem less divergent than they are in actual practice. Romantic Irony is a philosophical concept, while Tragic Irony is self-evident-

ly a dramatic form, depending for effect on the spectator's awareness of the whole truth, and on immediacy of impact. As it is used, it is a technique which demonstrates the implications of the fragmentation of reality. ] 8! *Comment on not discussing this though a study of use of DI is extremely enlightening. See P. 131.*

The Greek dramatists, using as they did traditional myths, were able to make effective use of irony to emphasise conflict on stage: conflict of will or purpose between characters ignorant of their situation vis à vis reality.<sup>8</sup> In the moment of truth for the protagonists in the drama, a larger irony reveals itself, an irony of cosmic proportions which bears the power of synthesis: appearance and reality are fused into one, and the false-ness of the situation exposed; yet still the real force as a technical means of catharsis is projected through the spectator's reaction to the scene in front of him.

Irony, therefore, is a powerful technique for a dramatist, and, skilfully employed, does not always need to depend on the spectator's foreknowledge of the end or a previous acquaintance with the story. It may be used simply to heighten tension, to force upon him a gradual awareness of what may happen to the extent that it becomes a preparation for what does in fact eventuate. Sedgwick illustrates this use of the mode in English drama with reference to Shakespeare's Othello,<sup>9</sup> demonstrating also that it may be very necessary in a form as compact as the dramatic. Beddoes for his <sup>part</sup> ~~appt~~ makes liberal use of Dramatic Irony as he would have learnt it from Shakespeare and the Greeks to anticipate and prepare for the turns of his plot which, soberly appraised, are at the least complex, sensational, and in one case unique.

To use the word "spectator" in connection with

Death's Jest Book immediately begs the question, since it suggests that the play is designed to be seen on the stage rather than to be read. Technically it has act and scene divisions, it is true, and Beddoes uses dramatic techniques for the presentation of the action. Formally he was no innovator. He learnt from dramatists who did write primarily for production, whereas he himself looked for the revival of the British stage on one hand<sup>10</sup> and promptly wrote his first play as a closet drama.<sup>11</sup> His love was the theatre, his talents were for blank verse writing; hence his predisposition to write plays. Yet his ~~pre~~ preoccupations were too multifarious and too subjective to allow him to write effectively for such a strict or constricting form despite his potential mastery of it. Thus in using Dramatic Irony in Death's Jest Book he is applying a dramatic technique to a work whose complex content and excessive length render it wellnigh unstageable, a fact which necessarily qualifies critical judgment.<sup>12</sup>

Yet as Beddoes did choose this particular form, the manner in which he employed Dramatic Irony should at least be examined, and the analysis, when allied to that of Romantic Irony which follows it, will help to expose both the faults and the undisciplined merits of Beddoes as a playwright.

The opening of Death's Jest Book presents two brothers, both in disguise for a purpose known only to the two of them. The use of disguise in drama at once suggests irony: a character who has more knowledge than the other protagonists in the action. Shakespeare gives an example in the character of the duke in Measure for Measure, Beddoes in Isbrand and Wolfram, whose adversary,

Duke Melferic, himself adopts a disguise later in the play to return to the city.<sup>13</sup> Beddoes offers examples of all the ironies in his play.

For half of the first scene of the play Isbrand ~~se~~ seems to be little more than a wordy jester whose asides to the verse-speaking characters of the court seem misanthropically malicious. The revelation of his true self and of Wolfram's is delayed for nearly two hundred lines, when, however, it becomes clear that Isbrand is the avenger and Wolfram has renounced his revenge and his distrust of the murderer and usurper Melferic. Indeed he is about to depart on a mission to rescue him from the Saracens, and the reader is made privy to the irony of the situation. In the revenge tradition, Isbrand is the dutiful son, and the reader's sympathies are, or should be, with him. Thus Wolfram is betraying his father's memory and overstepping the demands of his knightly duty in rescuing Melferic; more significantly, he is not impelled by a sense of duty alone. He trusts and loves Melferic, and deplores Isbrand's uncompromising hatred. Wolfram finds love nobler than revenge:

Open me any grave that earth can spare,  
Leave me the truth of love, and death is lovely.  
(1 i 266-7)

He has already affirmed his willingness to die rather than take revenge for his father's blood:

But should his blood need bloody expiation,  
Then let me perish.  
(262-3)

In the situation, this speech ought to arouse a feeling of perturbation. It is part of a late interpolation, appearing only in the c version of Act 1, and therefore it raises yet another interpretative question. The c version itself represents the attempt to rewrite and



improve the play, both to expand it and render it more dramatic.<sup>14</sup> These lines were written in conscious knowledge on Beddoes' part of what does follow, and there can be no doubt that he intended them to create the impression that Isbrand's suspicions are right and that Wolfram is tempting fate. In the latter scenes of Act 1 also some of the added passages are just those that underline the dramatic irony, which shows that Beddoes was conscious of the technique and striving for a particular effect. In this case and in the others of Act 1 he uses it to anticipate the course of events, to emphasise the potential drama inherent in a situation.

Another clue to the manner in which the plot will develop is offered by Amala's line 1 i 102 (c 173), referring to lady Wälfram serves in Africa. The lady is Sibylla who appears in scene ii with Melferic; her relationship to the absent Wolfram is revealed gradually in their dialogue which leads Melferic to avow the nature of his own love for her in these lines:

For if another being stepped between us,  
And were he my best friend, I must forget  
All vows, and cut his heart away from mine.

(1 ii, ab 130-2, c 162-4)

Even before Wolfram sets foot in Africa the potential conflict is suggested by these lines: "were he my best friend", which Wolfram is; and Isbrand's distrust is recalled by Melferic's hypothesis. The fact that actual vows beyond those of chivalry exist between the two men is established within a few moments. A blood bond has been entered into with the particular proviso that the first of them to die will visit the other.<sup>15</sup> Sibylla's aside, ab 183-4, c 230-1, makes the implication plain, Beddoes momentarily distrusting the capabilities of Dramatic Irony to suggest the outcome amid so much intricate

dialogue.

To this point Wolfram is ignorant that he has a rival, but Melveric hastens to warn him, and the conflict is brought into the open. Irony of circumstance forces the unwilling Wolfram to resume his rejected role of Melveric's antagonist, yet he is slow to acknowledge it.

The second scene makes clear the imminence of the catastrophe hinted at first by irony acting as much by reminiscence as by anticipation, and then stated unequivocally in Melveric's short monologue.<sup>16</sup> His hypothesis of some two hundred lines earlier crystallises into certainty: the blood bond is powerless against his infatuation for Sibylla. The opening ~~scene~~ of scene iii is entirely rewritten in the c version; the idyllic love scene of the ab text which glosses over the tension between the two men is replaced by two lyrics and a short speech by Wolfram in which Beddoes makes telling use of irony to create atmosphere and define the discrepancy between reality and Wolfram's idea of it. Wolfram wants a song of love; he scorns the first offering, "The Boding Dreams"; with its tale of murder ~~done~~ done while the heedless lover sleeps. The second song, presumably more to his taste, is no less ironical in its context, as it expresses the arbitrariness of love. By altering the opening of the scene Beddoes shows a surer dramatic touch. Instead of allowing the tension of the climax of scene two to dissipate he focuses the impending tragedy about the unsuspecting Wolfram. Irony of circumstance is allowed to intervene again: Wolfram is about to drink Ziba's poisoned cup when Melveric's men call for aid for the duke. Though Wolfram knows the wine was poisoned, and at whose command, chivalry prevents him from abandoning his lord. The credibility or otherwise

of his action need not detain us here; Beddoes' revisions of Act 1's Wolfram seem mainly designed to make this a not impossible gesture.

So Wolfram dies by the hand of the man he has rescued, and the blood bond is violated. The ironic force of the situation is conveyed in a different manner in the two extant versions, of which the c text is far more effective as drama. In it, the dying Wolfram acknowledges Isbrand's truer perception<sup>17</sup> and recalls the blood bond in his threat of revenge. The irony of the situation surrounding Wolfram is complete; that of Melveric's begins to emerge. Beddoes uses a lyric once again to create atmosphere: "As Sudden Thunder" promises resurrection. This is the second mention of the possibility of a return from beyond the grave, but the effect of these is cumulative rather than immediate; deliberately so, it would seem, since Wolfram's resurrection requires a great deal of preparation in the ~~xxxxxx~~ reader's mind. At this point there is the suggestion of haunting, or of the Last Judgment, and the lyric which concludes the c version of Act 1 imparts a tone of acceptance of death strengthened by the knowledge that it is not final.

Irony as Beddoes uses it in Act 1 is mainly directed towards dramatic preparation, setting the plot in motion and leaping over the time intervals both forward and backward to keep alive the sense of unity. There is preparation for Wolfram's heedless trust, for Melveric's treachery, and finally for Wolfram's return. Of these, only the last reaches out beyond the unit of Act 1; the others are resolved within it.

Act 11 returns to Isbrand, drinking and jesting in the first scene in the tavern at Ancona. Of himself, he says with conscious Socratic irony,

I am but a commentator on this world  
(11. 66-7)

The Isbrand of Act 1, however, has revealed other aspects of his nature, and in 11 ii he begins to display this darker side in action. His self-ironisation is instructive. As he says with half-acknowledged ambiguity, and with more truth than he knows, in 111 iii,

.... my failing is too much sentiment.  
(1. 372)

Circumstance intervenes through his agency when he exchanges the body of Wolfram for that of Melferic's dead wife, but once again the full effect of this act is only felt in retrospect. Beddoes allows the Dramatic Irony to lapse for a scene or two while a new aspect of the plot is introduced, a pattern which repeats itself later in the play.

However, by Act 11 scene iii Beddoes is again making use of irony to prepare for two later developments of the action. For the purpose of the drama, the blood-brotherhood of Wolfram and Melferic is intended to be as real as the kinship of the duke's two sons, Athulf and Adalmar, who are introduced as both being in love. Almost inevitably, it is with the same woman, Amala. Athulf reveals the fact in these words:

By heavens, 'tis Amala,  
Amala only, that he so can love.  
There? by her side? in conference! at smiles!  
Then I am born to be a fratricide.  
I feel as I were killing him. Tush, tush;  
A phantom of my passion! But, if true -  
What? What, my heart? A strangely-quiet thought,  
That will not be pronounced, doth answer me.  
(11.228-35)

Within the space of ten lines, while Athulf holds the front of the stage alone, a situation similar to that of Act 1 is stated, and in more or less similar terms.

This entanglement forms one of the play's sub-plots, and it merges with the main action, that around Isbrand, in the following scene, 11 iv; for a short time it seems that Isbrand is going to manipulate things to suit his own purposes:

- What? You have lost your love and so turned sour?  
And who has ta'en your chair in Amala's heaven?
- My brother, my Cain; Adalmar.
  - I'll help thee, prince.  
(11. 173-6)

Athulf's choice of an image, albeit reversed in application in accordance with his speech of the previous scene, recalls the archetypal fratricide as he nears the recognition of his instinctive reaction. The greater irony of the exchange with Isbrand must also be evident to the reader: the brother, nursing a grievance, reveals it to the man who is likely to foster it for reasons of his own, since he is not averse to exchanging two dead bodies to achieve a triumph he is unlikely to witness. Thus Athulf's passions place him at the mercy of forces he is unaware of. This development of the plot is the equivalent of the Elizabethan "play within a play"<sup>18</sup>; the irony of the situation is more than simple Dramatic Irony: there is a cosmic irony in the working out of the parallel fratricide, linked as it is by Isbrand's involvement to the first.

The preceding scene, 11 iii, reintroduces yet another aspect of the plot with the return of Melveric in disguise. The reason for his disguise is not entirely arbitrary, since certain lines of 1 i and 1 ~~iii~~<sup>iv</sup> suggest he is aware that rebellion is fermenting.<sup>19</sup> From within the safety of his pilgrim's dress he can appear a stranger and evaluate events as Duke Melveric. Nor is this the first time he has found it necessary to resort

to such subterfuge, as Thorwald recalls.<sup>20</sup> However, Melveric does not dominate the dialogue with Thorwald that precedes his unmasking. Under the questioning intended to establish his good faith he writhes; at one point Thorwald gives a further turn of the screw whose effect and effectiveness is unmistakable:

- There is no living knight his friend.
- O ill guessed, palmer! One whom Melveric  
Would give his life, all but his virtue for,  
lived he no more, to raise him from the dead.
- Right; he would give his soul; Thorwald, his  
(soul.  
(11. 317-321)

The irony is carried by the ambiguity of the dialogue as much as by the situation. Melveric has forfeited his soul in killing Wolfram, with the result that he cannot speak his name and talks in broken defensive sentences.<sup>21</sup> Melveric, who should be master of the situation, is forced at once into betraying his flawed conscience; he only recovers his poise when he stands revealed as Duke Melveric and as such is not beholden to his regent Thorwald. He can only deal with the conflict about him; the conflict within himself is outside his power. This fragmentation becomes apparent in the central scene of the play, 111 iii, and Beddoes' irony conveys this also.

Act 111 scene iii presents almost immediately the supremely confident Isbrand, despising his dupes, his fellows in the conspiracy,<sup>22</sup> and openly avowing the sense of power he feels. This is his apparent situation, and it is very far from the reality. For a man whose ends must be gained by playing on others' susceptibilities he is amazingly careless:

The unknown pilgrim! You have warrant, Isbrand,  
For trusting him?

(11. 72-3)



actual wish to raise his wife to life, yet he entertains her memory and resolves at least to take her remains into exile. For the rest of a long scene we see Mølveric alternately approaching and recoiling from his unsuspected fate until the reader knows Wolfram will rise from the dead in some manner. There is no element of surprise; rather the moment seems long overdue. Mølveric is at the mercy of Nemesis which makes the gesture of allowing Isbrand and Ziba to be its tools. The resurrection is transformed by the irony of the play into a dramatic necessity, not only in the sense that it ~~is~~ essential to the plot, but in that it ~~is~~ prepared thoroughly by a dramatist who was more critical of its probability than the reader, to whom it is one more sensation. Beddoes' personal involvement led him to transform the resurrection by using Romantic Irony, as will be seen.<sup>25</sup>

Thorwald's scepticism and Mølveric's refusal to hope act as a challenge to Ziba to prove his power over life and death. Mølveric is manoeuvred into demanding the resurrection despite the ominous ring of Ziba's

Aye, were I ever  
Where the accused innocent did pray  
The dead, whose murder he was falsely charged with,  
To rise and speak him free, I would essay  
My sires' sepulchral magic.

(11.259-63)

Word-spinning on Ziba's part this may be, but it recalls the nature of the corpse to be resurrected. Then there is an interlude in which Ziba steadfastly maintains his position and gives a pseudo-rationalistic explanation of the phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> The length of the scene may betray Beddoes' self-consciousness, yet it also betrays his inability to maintain suspense at the most important time, not so much in the extended build-up as in the long



speeches that dull perceptions that should be aroused. His instinctive appreciation of the value of irony contrives to be overwhelmed. One further touch of irony before the company departs: Ziba's threat

Were you worthy,  
I'd raise a spirit whom your conscience knows;  
And he would drag thee down into that world,  
Whither thou didst send him.

(11.461-4)

The recipient of this address is the cynical Isbrand, but the real irony is directed at Molveric; Isbrand's answer emphasises the deliberate contrast of moods on which this scene is built, for the climax itself depends upon this non-unity of tone.

In the minutes before the resurrection the irony is at its grimmest. Ziba begins the formalities:

Wilt thou submit unmurmuring to all evils,  
Which this recall to a forgotten being  
May cause to thee and thine?

.... And art thou ready  
To follow, if so be its will, the ghost,  
Whom you will re embody, to the place  
Which it doth now inhabit?

(11. 504-9)

The elements of the tragic are there as Molveric burns the blood bond, but in vain. Beddoes makes use of what is almost bathos: Mandrake below, complaining of his growth of beard, and Molveric above:

One moment's peace and silence!

Let me remember what a grace she had....

(11.568-9)

Irony transcends the purely dramatic usage at this moment; irony it is, but Romantic Irony.<sup>27</sup> Beddoes crosses the thin line between the two, and when Mandrake is at last disposed of and Wolfram appears, the attempt to restore a little of the previous mood and prevent the true res-

urrection from passing almost unnoticed is grotesque in effect, though no longer Romantic Irony.<sup>28</sup>

As the climax is reached and the action begun in Act I resolved, a new kind of Dramatic Irony is perceptible: appearance and reality fall into place and both Melferic and Wolfram recognise the situation for what it is. Melferic is defeated, yet Beddoes the satirist adds another savage touch, which, in the first and minor climax of the play, foreshadows the denouement of Act V. The duke determines on petty temporal revenge on Wolfram for daring to return:

Thou murderer of nature, it shall be  
A question, which haunts which, while thou dost last.  
(ll. 693-4)

Here also the dichotomy of tragedy and satire is apparent. On one hand, Death's Jest Book satirises the futility of man's aspirations, on the other Beddoes employs irony in it in the established manner of a tragedian. There is too little compassion for a tragedy, yet too little satire in the general trend of this scene and of the play as a whole. Three of the main characters are potentially tragic figures; this leads to diffuseness in itself and the Romantic Irony which will be discussed below adds a further problematic dimension. The satiric viewpoint obtrudes from time to time but it is not as pervasive in the broad general action as the tragic sense it so cleverly manages to destroy and thus create the disturbing quality of a double perspective. In the first three acts it is not always clear who or what - or indeed if anything at all - is being satirised, though the final acts gradually move towards a resolution.

The sense of acceptance is re-established in Act IV scene 1 with Melferic's soliloquy<sup>29</sup>, and Thorwald's speech

on his entry confirms this. Irony is the pervasive mode; Melveric's remarks on the presence of Wolfram are pure irony of understatement which encompasses a truth too large to be conceived while being framed as a blatant and perceptible untruth:

The carcass owes to me its ruinous life  
....Therefore he clings to me so ivily.  
      .... 'Tis in truth  
A faithful slave.

(11. 44-9)

The scene proceeds with a further confrontation of the disguised Melveric and Isbrand and introduces a new theme which at first consideration seems arbitrary and without respect for character as previously conceived. This is Isbrand's sudden declaration of his intention to wed Sibylla, which is disposed of in a few lines in this scene and referred to in even fewer in the final one.<sup>30</sup> It seems unnecessary and inexplicable except in terms of Dramatic Irony. In this light we find Isbrand professing all unknowing in Melveric's presence his desire to marry the woman for whom Melveric embraced the ultimate dishonour and damnation. This recalls the initial act of the chain of causation and at the same time underlines the larger irony, and the psychological truth, that Melveric's guilt has destroyed his power to love.<sup>31</sup>

Act IV scene iii reintroduces the Athulf-Adalmar-Amala entanglement prepared for in Act II and referred to in passing in IV ii. Beddoes relies on the parallel plot to carry the scene which opens with a monologue from Athulf closely resembling Melveric's speech of I ii 363-76:

Satirical Murder, help me.... Ha! I am  
Devil inspired! out with you, ye fool's thoughts!  
(11.18-19)

The memento mori of Amala's bridesmaid a few lines later seems artificial and unnecessary in the context, and as Dramatic Irony overstrained.<sup>32</sup> Dramatic Irony in fact is no longer necessary. The details of the scene, the working out of the "play within the play" follow relentlessly those of the first fratricide: Adalmar saves Athulf's life as he thinks, only to die by his hand. No Isbrand is needed to manage the affair. The whole passage assumes ironical proportions as it retraces the events of Act 1 scene iv.

From here onwards Beddoes dispenses almost completely with Dramatic Irony. The sub-plots are disposed of or integrated and the denouement of the main action is set in motion. There is a moment of irony in Isbrand's explanation of his revision of the Harpagus story:

..... and I  
Differ in somewhat from Herodotus.  
But altering the facts of history,  
When they are troublesome....  
Will scarcely visit rigorously.  
(1V iv 58-62)

Isbrand is shown at his most triumphant and then allowed to encompass his physical and spiritual doom in the scenes which follow.

In the concluding scenes of the play the real irony is that of awareness, which in the context helps to further the satire: the conspirators' realisation of Isbrand's true nature, and Isbrand's own delayed and initially discredited acceptance of his mortal, ungod-like nature, Melveric's realisation that his sons are dead and his own fate at the hands of Nemesis. Wolfram rules as ironist over the conclusion, justifying his wearing of the fool's cap<sup>33</sup> and assuring Melveric

[Your sons] will be here, and sooner  
Than you would wish.

(11.288-9)

He speaks the truth, and knows it. On every level, the play is concerned with stripping away the layers of appearance to expose the reality.

Whereas the situation at the end of Act III is inherently tragic, the play ends on a satirical note. The reasons for this are clear enough. Beddoes will not allow his reality to be essentially tragic. Within two acts Isbrand has emerged as the dominant figure beside whom the despairing Melveric is barely tragic; yet Isbrand in his turn has been shown up as unequivocally evil and corrupt in the social context and not merely the victim of his tragic flaw. Wolfram's resurrection which in Act III seemed necessary only to the outcome of the play develops in V iv an additional philosophical implication also conveyed in the Dance of Death as Death assumes a new perspective in Beddoes' view of the world. The fourth dimension, the ideological, is the untragic. Unable to produce a tragedy, Beddoes twisted it into a satire.

[ Tragedy; satire; the politico-social perspective; philosophy. These are uneasy companions within a single five act play. [Dramatic Irony and satire: two modes of perception whose effects conflict. Beddoes' predisposition to irony was of a more comprehensive nature than has so far been demonstrated,] and in Death's Jest Book he makes use of <sup>the</sup> [another type of irony which resolves, or ought to resolve, all the diverse aspects of his own standpoint, a philosophical concept: <sup>they</sup> (the) Romantic Irony] formulated by the German theoretician Friedrich Schlegel.

Critics of Romanticism and Romantic theory are accustomed to use such terms as proteusartig to describe this particular form of irony: "changing in shape as readily as the Old Man of the Sea", as Sedgwick aptly defines the expression.<sup>34</sup> For the purpose of this discussion of Romantic Irony as Beddoes practised it in Death's Jest Book it is essential to grasp its fundamental nature and variations, as it ultimately embraces the total philosophical outlook of the Romantic literary theorist; and moreover to establish how and to what purpose it may be used in the creation of an original work, that is, in conscious practice, since a great many of Friedrich Schlegel's examples are of works already written before he formulated his doctrine.

Concerning the irony of Socrates, Friedrich Schlegel singles out for emphasis "jene..... Mischung von Scherz und Ernst", and again he states<sup>35</sup>

Sie enthält und erregt ein Gefühl von dem unauflöselichen Widerstreit des Unbedingten und des Bedingten, der Unmöglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer vollständigen Mittheilung..... Sie ist die freieste aller Lizenzen, denn durch sie setzt man sich über sich selbst weg, und doch auch die gesetzlichste, denn sie ist unbedingt notwendig.

As the critic Rudolf Haym states,<sup>36</sup> Schlegel's interpretation of Socrates' irony is shaping itself in these sentences into an aesthetic doctrine which is alienated from its original significance. However, it is not difficult to grasp the philosophic basis of ~~these~~ these claims, despite the fact that Schlegel is primarily concerned with aesthetics in that he transfers the philosophical perception to the artist's view of his own work. Goethe is his example. The poet seems to smile down on

20.

"sein Meisterwerk... von der Höhe seines Geistes". It is a development on a different level of the spirit in which the dramatist uses Tragic Irony to present the actions of characters as they would be viewed by the power ordering man's destiny. As the Romantic philosopher Solger sees it,<sup>37</sup> irony in human creation means conduct similar to God's. It is not impossible to see the inherent principle of this in the irony of Socrates, and this is the aspect with its various implications which the Romantics developed as a principle of aesthetics. In the poetry of the ironist dwells

....eine wirklich transzendente Buffon-  
erie. Im Innern die Stimmung, welche  
alles übersieht und sich über alles Bedingte  
unendlich erhebt, auch über eigene Kunst,  
Tugend oder Genialität; im Aussen in ~~der~~  
der Ausführung, die mimische Manier eines  
gewöhnlichen guten italienischen Buffo.

Appearance and reality are transmuted into bedingt and unbedingt: finite and infinite. This is the theory; in terms of practical application the twofold aspect of the ironic method in aesthetics becomes apparent. The poet in his godlike distantiation may include every mood, since he is above categories and stands outside even his own creation. From this position, which is a manifestation of his inner attitude, he looks down on his work and if he so desires may play with moods and concepts in self-mimicry, which is the external representation of his creative spirit. From here it is a short step to Tieck's Romantic Irony, though this is a variation which constricts the original concept.

The ultimate vision of Romantic Irony presents a means of synthesis, not of appearance and reality, but of all appearances, in an attempt to approach reality.

Yet what was the Reality of the Romantic theoreticians? If Tieck stripped the concept of Romantic Irony of its philosophical attitude it was because he was unacquainted with the ideas of the philosopher from whose work Schlegel adduced an ideological basis for his vision, having "romanticised" the original concept beyond any recognisably Socratic limits. As a Romantic theorist, he found a Romantic philosopher whose ideas were akin to and congruent with his own: Fichte.

The Reality of the Romantic ironist is the Reality of Fichte, and there is no objective reality in Fichte's world. The world is a creation of the individual Ich, which again has its origin in Socratic or Platonic philosophy, though to reunite this with the concept of irony Schlegel found it necessary to use the secondary source of Fichtean doctrine. The world and the world order exist in terms of the ego which creates them; in Schlegel's aesthetics reality is equally subjective and art and poetry form the created world of the inexhaustible ego which reaches out infinitely through them, since they, no less than the world, are an Idea. Of this Idea, Schlegel writes:

Eine Idee ist ein bis zur Ironie vollendeter Begriff, eine absolute Synthese absoluter Antithesen, der stete sich selbst erzeugender Wechsel zwei streitender Gedanken.

This is the irony which is if necessary the "Form des Paradoxen", with the ability to resolve all opposites and certainly to include within its range all moods both congruous and incongruous. Hence it strives towards a harmony which is not the classical harmony of unity but one gained by resolving and including all opposites as do life and the universe.



While the Romantic theorists and philosophers play with concepts in truly ironic manner, reducing their meaning to both everything and nothing, the underlying attitude of Romantic Irony remains fairly constant. A critic like Ricarda Huch manages to define it almost out of any sort of practical existence,<sup>38</sup> whereas Schlegel himself makes the same essential points without becoming obsessed with abstract nouns:

Ironie ist klares Bewusstsein der ewigen  
Agilität des unendlich vollen Chaos.

And,

Wir müssen uns über unsere eigene Liebe  
erheben, und was wir anbeten, in Gedanken  
vernichten können: sonst fehlt uns, was  
wir auch für andere Fähigkeiten haben,  
der Sinn für das Weltall.

On the practical question of acquiring this "cosmic sense", Petrich talks of the "zur Doppelgängererei gesteigerte Subjectivität" of Romantic Irony,<sup>39</sup> a phrase which evokes the traditional critical dualism of objective/subjective and at the same time explains its application to the doctrine, which attempts to strive for objectivity through supreme subjectivity, hence the disturbing sense of double vision, of Doppelgängererei.<sup>40</sup>

The work of the Romantic theoreticians on irony tends to betray the fact that when it comes to practical example they often codify an aesthetic attitude already present and implicit in literary practice. The Romantic Irony of Tieck, the only creative writer among the older Romantics to use it, is the most ~~notorious~~ contentious of all since in its most notorious and easily grasped manifestations it is little more than a conscious destruction of mood<sup>41</sup> or a playing with concepts. The germ of his treatment in Der gestiefelte Kater may be

found in the theories discussed above, for he uses irony for the purposes of a satire which includes himself as author, or rather an alter ego which is himself. This is not to imply that irony and satire are synonymous, for in terms of viewpoint they are antitheses; however, Tieck's form of Romantic Irony lends itself to the expression of a satirical outlook, though in William Lovell its use is more consistent with Schlegel's. On the other hand, where drama is concerned the ironic method as the Romantics conceived it may justify the total rejection of the Aristotelian unities, whose validity is in fact attacked by A.W.Schlegel,<sup>42</sup> and a concentration on each particular aspect of the action for its own sake and at any length desired. At this point, in the application of theory to practice, the concept of irony becomes almost too "proteusartig" for practical definition, too all-inclusive, and it may seem that Tieck's form is as pure as any other, since he made a creative use of it. The final word on Romantic Irony in practice may only be stated when its purpose and limitations have been examined in terms of a concrete example, in this case Death's Jest Book.

If the concept of Romantic Irony is to be applied to drama, either as a means of interpretation or in this case as an actual creative force, the key is not to be found in the original aesthetic doctrine of Friedrich Schlegel, but in the dramatic criticism of his brother August Wilhelm. With the help of A.W.Schlegel, co-translator with Tieck of Shakespeare, we come closer to grasping the concept in practice as he saw and defined it: the Old Man of the Sea in one of his more tangible forms, and reproduced for all time.

Thomas Lovell Beddoes certainly knew the work of

A.W.Schlegel, in particular his Vorlesungen über dramatische Literatur und Kunst;<sup>43</sup> and of these lectures, a section of the twenty-seventh discusses the use of irony by Shakespeare, whom the Romantics regarded as a consummate practitioner of Romantic art. This long passage must be quoted extensively, for it is an illuminating exposure of a technique:

Die Ironie bezieht sich beim Shakespeare nicht bloss auf die einzelne Charactere, sondern häufig auf das Ganze der Handlung. Die meisten Dichter, welche menschliche Begebenheiten erzählend oder dramatisch schildern, nehmen Partei, und verlangen von den Lesern blinden Glauben für ihre Bemühungen zu erheben oder herabzusetzen..... Auf jeden Fall werden wir gewahr, dass wir die Sache....durch das Medium einer fremden Denkart erblicken. Wenn hingegen der Dichter zuweilen durch einer geschickte Wendung die weniger glänzende Kehrseite der Münze nach vorne dreht, so setzt er sich mit dem auserlesenen Kreis der Einsichtsvollen unter seinen Lesern oder Zuschauern in ein verstohlenes Einverständnis; er zeigt ihnen, dass er ihre Einwendungen vorhergesehen und im voraus zugegeben habe; dass er nicht selbst in dem dargestellten Gegenstande befangen sei, sondern frei über ihm schwebt, und dass er den schönen, unwiderstehlich anziehenden Schein, den er selbst hervorgezaubert, wenn er anders wollte, unerbittlich vernichten konnte. Wo das eigentlich Tragische eintritt, hört freilich alle Ironie auf....

<sup>h</sup> Schlegel continues by referring to the specific ironic purpose of the comic scenes and characters. The comic intervals, he states

überall dienen...dazu, zu verhüten, dass das Spiel sich nicht in ein Geschäft verwandelt, dem Gemüt seine Heiterkeit zu bewahren, und jenen trüben schwunglosen Ernst abzuhalten, der sich so leicht im sentimental, jedoch nicht tragischen

Schauspiele einschleicht..... aber die Vermischung so ungleichartiger und scheinbar streitender Bestandteile in demselben Werk kann nur durch künstlerische Absichten wie die obenangeführten gerechtfertigt werden. In Shakespeares Dramen sind die komischen Szenen das Vorzimmer der Poesie, wo sich die Bedienten aufhalten....

The irony to which Schlegel refers is more comprehensive than Dramatic Irony. It is unquestionably the irony of the Romantics: Romantic Irony. Schlegel is not merely analysing Shakespeare's technique but interpreting it according to an a priori aesthetic doctrine, describing in fact how the ironic viewpoint works in drama. Undeniably he imposes a construction of his own on the work of a playwright who presents unconsciously a certain attitude to his ~~own~~ creation. Yet at the same time he exposes the potential of a type of ironic view in drama which is altogether different from Tieck's. Most instructive of all is his recognition that irony - Romantic Irony, that is, for cosmic irony is the stuff of tragedy - is incompatible with the true tragic sense; though he speaks in part of the comic interludes, he refers also to the use of irony to dissipate the sentimental. Irony, therefore, must be used with intuitive discretion, and its particular use is closely allied to the dramatist's own purpose, as in Beddoes' play.

"Irony", says Sedgwick, "is nearly the whole panoply of the satirist",<sup>44</sup> and ~~it~~ Beddoes professed to write Death's Next Book as a satirist and not as a tragedian. Though he set out to satirise man and his folly in general, he found that he as author was most vulnerable of all. In the original instance the play was a projection of his morbid fear of death; his fate and the play's hinged on a single dramatic moment. He had to prove that

physical resurrection was possible and more: that it was a demonstrable scientific fact. He failed, and from this point dates a new attitude to his play.<sup>45</sup> It seems manifestly absurd and exaggerated to claim that a philosophical or aesthetic doctrine could have saved his reason, yet this seems to have been very nearly the case. The play, Death's Jest Book, represented his failure to come to terms with existence; it was the adjunct to his studies, and these were directed towards serving the purpose of his play.

It is impossible to establish a logical chain of causation to explain the presence of Romantic Irony in Death's Jest Book but the fact that it is there speaks for itself in the text, in the patent attempt to transform a failed reality into an idea, a transformation which never became quite satisfactory and complete. It is necessary only to show that this Romantic Irony is not present by coincidence of time or place or interest. Beddoes' letters give the evidence. By 1826-7 the first rough outline of Death's Jest Book was prepared, he had lost his faith, he was reading Tieck, and moreover he was becoming aware of the validity of the Shakespearian vision. Only by striving for objectivity, to dissociate himself from the vital personal significance of his play, could he bring it to a satisfactory conclusion. At some stage in his struggle for understanding he read Schlegel's dramatic criticism which may only have confirmed his own instinctive interpretation of Shakespeare. In 1830 he wrote of Shakespeare's characters,<sup>46</sup>

The witches, Peter & the nurse....in a less degree Kent and Lear's fool, are all more or less purposely destructive of the tragic illusion - giving time to recover from the

surprize wh<sup>h</sup> the course of <sup>the</sup> events produce: their good is that they give the hearers to understand that the poet is not absolutely in earnest with his deaths & horrors, & leaves it to them to be affected with them or not as they think proper; and secondly, that the audience, as well as everybody, is less likely to laugh at & deride the gravity of a person, with whom his wit and satire has compelled them to laugh: - besides that the change is grounded on the law of oscillation wh<sup>h</sup> pervades all physical and moral nature - sleeping and waking, merriment & tears - sin & repentance, life & death - wh<sup>h</sup> all depend & are consequent on one another.

He seems to indicate that these are his own thoughts, yet they are too similar to Schlegel's to be uninfluenced by them, though at several years' remove and coloured by his own interpretation and his own creative work.

In view of the range of his reading of German thought and criticism, Beddoes could not have been ignorant of Romantic Irony. He gradually came to appreciate the need for ~~\*\*\*~~ detachment in his own writing, but not a mere destruction of illusion at any given point in Tieck's manner. His whole attitude to life was reorienting itself and with it came a new approach to the subject matter of Death's Jest Book from which he came to dissociate himself more and more by technical means. Irony became necessary to the expression of his vision; Romantic Irony, that is, for it is a vision in itself. Death's Jest Book in its final form furnishes an excellent example of the practice of this irony, a philosophy of life transmuted into an approach to art, in the ~~spirit~~ spirit of the Schlegel brothers and Tieck, and if on occasions this irony seems close to the borderline that separates it from standard dramatic practice, it is still palpably employed for a specific purpose, and its effect in the total context is that of Romantic Irony.

The complications of Beddoes' moral vision as he embodies it in Mario present a critical problem: is this Romantic Irony or is it not? Whether or not Schlegel is referring to comic interludes only, and this does not seem to be the case, when he speaks of "the less brilliant reverse of the medal",<sup>47</sup> does not really matter. Beddoes introduces Mario emphatically and concretely at such a crucial moment in the play that it seems a deliberately calculated move to dissociate himself from Isbrand who was getting out of hand. Isbrand had taken over the play; once the resurrection was only valid as an idea, the whole emphasis was thrown on to Isbrand; he is a potentially tragic figure, and the most vital character in the play; yet satire, and not tragedy, was Beddoes' aim. The concept of Liberty as Mario portrays it is essentially modern - compare for example Shakespeare's attitude to revolution - and essentially Romanticism was a "modern" movement. For the sake of truth, Isbrand had to be betrayed, whatever violence this was to do to the play, and Mario must be interpreted as a creation in the spirit of Romantic Irony: dissociation of the poet's self from its projection Isbrand. The figure of Mario is too specific to be no more than an instrument of fate. So Beddoes attempts at a late stage in the ~~xxxx~~ drama to bring Isbrand within the satirical perspective; he had alternate means to hand, but none so fitting ~~etc~~ to the ideological content of the plot; and the tragic sense is utterly negated by this and other means long ~~before~~<sup>before</sup> the conclusion of the play is reached. By satisfying his integrity Beddoes leaves the reader with a profound sense of dissatisfaction. The employment of Romantic Irony on this occasion in particular produces a feeling of Doppelgängererei which arises directly from ~~Beddoes~~ Beddoes' striving

for an imperfectly felt objectivity, from his attempt to satirise belatedly the things closest to his heart.

The mixture of comedy and tragedy within one play could not in itself be regarded as Romantic Irony by one educated in the English tradition. This is a German Romantic's interpretation of a technique used with success by Shakespeare;<sup>48</sup> one, however, that Beddoes did not employ in any play prior to Death's Jest Book. In the Jest Book he uses it to such lengths in the first three acts that it too is ultimately destructive of the tragic sense; Mandrake does not wait in the "antechamber" but intrudes into the deeply serious resurrection scene as an integral part. He is not in the scene by accident, or even for comic relief, to "dispel sentimentality", as Schlegel puts it. He is there for a purpose, as a vehicle of Romantic Irony: the most important one in the play, if one bears in mind the changing significance of the resurrection of Wolfram in Beddoes' development. The part of Mandrake demonstrates exactly how and why Beddoes used Romantic Irony, and also that it is a more immanent force in the play than is generally assumed.

Mandrake is, of course, alive at all times throughout the first three acts of Death's Jest Book. The point must be stressed, since there is tacit and universal critical assumption that he is a real ghost in Act II scene I and possibly later.<sup>49</sup> To mistake him for a dead man is to destroy most of the ironic sense of III iiii. Mandrake's boy describes his accident in these words:

...but last night in the storm, the waves rolled,  
and the ship rolled in them and in the middle  
of dreams fell the pot of balsam on the man's  
skull who made it, broke it to pieces and  
bathed him from head to foot, and so ran he about  
dripping with the oil of invisibility and tears  
for his lost body - but here he comes: see him not.  
(II i 70-5)



The last words are obviously an injunction to carry on the joke against the deluded Mandrake, who may be invisible, though this is doubtful, but is certainly alive. The Boy's grammar is involved, but an analysis of his sentences may even support this contention.<sup>50</sup>

So poor Mandrake is forced to impersonate the dead Wolfram, which in itself argues against invisibility and in favour of delusion, and finds himself a homeless vagrant in Silesia, dead in his own eyes, and seeking a bed for the night. Thus far he is a comic figure, not really involved in the Isbrand-Wolfram-Melveric conflict. Yet this is how he soliloquises in III iii:

After all being dead's not so uncomfortable when one's got into the knack of it. There's nothing to do, no taxes to pay, nor any quarrelling about the score for ale. And yet I begin shrewdly to suspect that death's all a take-in: as soon as the gentlemen have gained some 70 years of experience they begin to be weary of the common drudgery of the world, lay themselves down, hold their breath, close their eyes and are announced as having entered into the fictitious condition by means of epitaphs and effigies. But, good living people, don't you be deceived any more: It is only a cunning invention to avoid paying poor's rates and the reviewers. They all live jollily underground....and laugh at their poor innocent great-grandchildren who...tremble for fear of death, which is at best only a ridiculous game at hide and seek.

(III.iii-14)

Somehow this is not quite comedy, even for Beddoes: the live man who thinks death is "all a take-in". At first it appears to be satire, part of the satire of man's view of death that Beddoes intended the play to be, especially as the lines seem to be directed at the audience. However, in the concluding passage it turns on Beddoes himself in ridicule of his former ambition:

That is my conviction....but I will only keep away from the living till I have met a few of these gentle would-be dead....and am initiated into their secrets, and then I will write to the newspapers, turn King's evidence and discover the whole import and secret...though sure to be opposed by the doctors and undertakers whose invention the whole most extravagant idea seems to be....

(11.15-22)

Snow refers to the concept of Romantic Irony as "self-parodying", which seems to be his definition of it; an insufficient one, for Beddoes is indulging in more than self-parody in the words he places in the mouth of Mandrake. As Donner says, after becoming acquainted with Romantic Irony, Beddoes set to work "in a flippant mood which contrasts sharply against the gruesomeness of what had gone before".<sup>51</sup> The first part of Mandrake's speech is flippant; the second is something else: "write to the newspapers", words only in the b and c versions, express a satirical - ironical, in fact - denigration of Beddoes' own ambition to prove the fallacy of death in a drama. He is no better than a Mandrake, the prototype of the indignant suburbanite who airs his grievance against the established order in the columns of the daily press. He ridicules what he knows to have been the whole idea of the play in these words, pushing the resurrection even farther from himself than before. His purpose transforms Mandrake's speech into Romantic Irony. *(in a parody of his own language)*

Mandrake goes into the sepulchre which holds Wolfram's corpse to "keep up the joke a little longer".<sup>52</sup> And what a build-up there is to his next appearance! The whole of 111 iii, the central scene of the play; the gradual approach of Wolfram's resurrection, prepared for by Beddoes' Dramatic Irony, while the ~~Romantic~~ Romantic Irony hovers in the air; Ziba's mystic mumbo jumbo, his reas-

oning based on the bone luz, in whose use here there is not a little irony. And only then the moment arrives, with Melferic awaiting his wife's appearance, the reader expecting Wolfram's.

Here is the passage. For its total effect, it must be quoted at length:

A Voice: Who breaks my death?

Ziba: Draw on thy body, take up thy old limbs,  
And then come forth tomb-born.

Mandrake:(within) I have drawn on my stockings, and taken up my old jerkin, but before I go out, can't you give me some water to shave with? I have a beard of a week's growth with which I decline appearing before the ladies; and on an occasion of being raised one would willingly be a little spruce, Master Sorcerer.

Duke: One moment's peace and silence!  
Let me remember what a grace she had,  
Even in her dying hour; her soul set not,  
But at its noon Death like a cloud came o'er it,  
And now hath passed away. O come to me  
Thou dear departed spirit of my wife;  
And, surely as I clasp thee once again,  
Thou shalt not die without me.

Ziba: Ho! there, Grave,  
Is life within thee?

A voice from within: Melferic, prepare.

Mandrake from within: Coming, coming! This cursed boot!

Duke: Didst hear that answer? Open, and let in  
The blessing to my eyes, whose subtle breath  
Doth penetrate my heart's quick; let me hear  
That dearest name out of those dearest lips.  
Who's there? Who comes? (U. 560. 613)

Ziba: Momus of Hell, what's this?

Enter Mandrake from the sepulchre

As previously stated, this is the moment where irony transcends the dramatic. Beddoes must have been aware of what he was about; there is the matter of the deleted song, "Thread the nerves",<sup>53</sup> which is comedy of a sort Beddoes

might have considered too grotesque even for his own taste, and its exclusion can be justified on a number of grounds, all of which bear out the contention that he was calculating his effects. As they stand, Melveric's rapturous lines are no more than bathos, which may be a sub-category of Romantic Irony in its synthesising role. At this of all moments bathos and farce are introduced. This is not questionable taste: it is a deliberate mockery of the whole situation, so serious to the protagonists, so hollow to Beddoes himself, hence his insistence on Mandrake's role in it. At one stroke he destroys any illusion that this could be taken seriously. It is no wonder that his early editors cut the Mandrake part to a minimum.

Nor does Mandrake content himself with this single speech. He introduces himself formally, nicknames and all, and ridicules Ziba's incantation:

...the next time don't bait your ghost-trap with bombast and doggrell, but good beef: we live poorly in the dead line: and so...you may catch as many ghosts...as rats in a granary.

(11.587-91)

As an afterthought he informs them that there is "a ghost of longer standing" "putting himself together" in the vault; so Ziba's incantation has succeeded. Mandrake's role cannot be explained away as diverting the laughter from Wolfram,<sup>54</sup> or as providing comic relief. It provides a fake resurrection, an extension of the sub-plot along parallel lines in traditional fashion, but to such effect that the real resurrection when it occurs is reduced to a virtual anti-climax. The scene's catharsis has already taken place, and the emotions are diverted. The opposite argument may of course be advanced, as it is by Donner, and this still falls within the limits of the function of Romantic Irony; yet it does not seem the

more likely. Wolfram belongs to the "tragic" part of the plot; Mandrake's task is to throw doubt on the seriousness of the whole business, as Beddoes intended. And what better way to do this than to "resurrect" a live man, which may be symbolic in itself. This is Romantic Irony, it is Beddoes saying he is no longer personally responsible, as it were, for the resurrection of Wolfram. It is no more than a necessary part of the play.

The type of Romantic Irony associated with the name of Tieck restricts itself mainly to self-parody, and its literary ancestry is more tangible than that of the Schlegel brothers' more philosophical irony, as Lussky demonstrates in his study of the concept.<sup>55</sup> Tieck's practice offers yet another example of the conscious codification and extension of an unconscious traditional mode. Thus where Beddoes uses this more restricted Romantic Irony in Death's Jest Book it cannot be unequivocally stated that he imitated Tieck, or wrote under his influence, despite the evidence that he knew what Tieck was doing,<sup>56</sup> and in his own commentary instinctively adopts his own most ironical tone. The Tieckian irony is found in the later parts of the play after the true Schlegelian irony has begun its work on the potential themes and their apparent treatment, investing them with the satirical dimension Beddoes wished to emphasise. There can be little doubt that the Tieckian passages were written about the time Beddoes was reading the works of Tieck: specifically, plays like Ritter Blaubart, Der gestiefelte Kater, Rotkäppchen, the first of which had already made a contribution to Death's Jest Book, and it seems extremely likely that Tieck's example was Beddoes' inspiration.

It is also an incontrovertible fact that the pre-disposition to self-depreciation and wry self-mockery was part of Beddoes' fundamental nature; however, his anti-Romantic attitudes are introduced into the play under the auspices of Romantic Irony. There is Isbrand's description of the moon, III iii 26-7, and the deliberate shock of incongruous moods of Isbrand's apologetic confession to ballad-making:

Sometimes, in leizure moments  
And a romantic humour; this I made  
One night a-strewing poison for the rats  
In the kitchen corner...  
What is the night bird's tune, wherewith she  
(startles  
The bee out of his dreams and the true lover...  
What is the lobster's tune when he is boiled?  
I hate your ballads that are made to come  
Round like a squirrel's cage and round again.  
We nightingales sing boldly from our hearts...  
(III iii 307-19)

The ballad from his heart is "Squats on a toadstoål", one Procter condemned. And there is Wolfram's anti-Romantic contribution, "Old Adam the carrion crow", of V iv, a satire of Isbrand's style. These are only three examples within a play that takes effect through its contrasts; III iii is constructed about them, and in German Romantic tradition this juxtaposition of mood seems to be a peripheral type of Romantic Irony in practice according to the spirit in which it is made.

Beddoes' irony is sometimes directed at the reader, or the despised critic, for example in the three songs of IV iii as he discloses in a letter to Kelsall:<sup>57</sup> the first was

something Moorish in rhythmus and expression...  
a tolerable watery imitation; the 2nd a specimen of the bad but very popular sentimental if - oh! - and - why? lovesong; the third in the style wh, to my conviction, is the right

and genuine one in tone, feeling and form, for a song of the tender and more poetic kind.

Such is the subtlety of irony and its tendency to be mistaken that Beddoes feels constrained to add,

No critic however will see what I meant, & indeed I may have failed in my purpose, for Bourne seemed to like the 1st as well as the 3rd...

In any case he replaced the second song with one of his "genuine" lyrics, "Lady was it fair of thee", but the significant thing is that Beddoes' friends had shown him that irony is a difficult medium.<sup>58</sup> The reception given to his passages of Romantic Irony by those in England who were unaware that any such thing existed is instructive.<sup>59</sup>

However, the less rarified forms of Romantic Irony are perceptible enough, though less important, except that they too reflect Beddoes stepping outside himself momentarily to take a sober look at his rhetoric. This is Siegfried, bowing out of the play in disillusionment:

Once more, farewell: I wish you all, believe me,  
Happily old, mad, sick, and dead and cursed.  
- That gentleman should have applied his talent  
To writing new-year's wishes.

(V iv 193-6)

This illustrates Beddoes' irony as it imparts the sense of "conversational truth" remarked by Donner:<sup>60</sup> a confrontation of moods as in life, and irony as deflation rather than as parody.

The last scene is not restricted to this type of irony which exists only within the framework of the action. Romantic Irony and the resultant alienation both of the reader and the author himself introduces the satirical note of the denouement. It overrides the tragic,

reducing it to relative terms, frustrating the Aristotelian pity and fear. The satire becomes a sort of substitute intellectual cathartic as Beddoes not only has Isbrand murdered and produces the corpse of Sibylla but looks down on the climax he has been preparing and says through Wolfram

You in the wall there, my light thin archers,  
Come forth and dance a little: 'tis the season  
When you may celebrate Death's Harvest Home.  
(11.296-8)

- and proceeds with the antimasque: three more corpses and Melveric's damnation, all within some fifty lines. The number of deaths hardly matters; nor should the fact of Death. Wolfram is the only character exempt from the satire, apart from Mario who has made an exit, and Wolfram has assumed his full ideological stature within the world of the play. He is the voice of Beddoes' irony, and the Deaths are his chorus. Beddoes had overcome his obsession with death, his "skeleton complex", and could express a new vision. Hence Wolfram is the philosophical voice which gives the conclusion of the play its dimension of satire.

The satirical aspect of Death's Jest Book is only fully comprehensible and artistically explicable within the terms of reference of Romantic Irony and Beddoes' own inner development which led him to impose it on the original conception. Without his fear of death he would never have begun the play with its all-important resurrection, despite his interest in the Isbrand-revenge plot, or if he had its orientation would have been totally different; without Romantic Irony he could not have expressed adequately in it his satirical view of man's life and aspirations, from which even an Isbrand cannot be safe, being a mortal man. Wolfram passes through



death to understanding, thus the resurrection is made to serve the idea of the play, though as it stands, in its position in III iii, it is inseparable from Beddoes' original conception of its function. Romantic Irony offered him a means to express his coming to terms with the existential facts of life and death, yet in using it he placed the emphasis of Wolfram's resurrection on the comic rather than the symbolic level; the irony is an artificial means to the achievement of a distanciation the author could not quite feel. And ~~an~~ Mario is no substitute for an Isbrand, least of all in the sympathies of the reader.

Death's Jest Book must ultimately be judged as a work of art, however, and it is here that the Romantic Irony loses its validity. It is an intellectual concept, far less immediately effective than Dramatic Irony; it depends for effect on the reader's - or the spectator's, where it is used in stage drama - awareness of the author's intention, otherwise it seems to be mere bathos, or arbitrariness, or whimsy, or even bad taste. To some extent it seems all of these things in Death's Jest Book if the intention is mistaken, since Beddoes' most pervasive Romantic Irony is the least "practical" and most easily misunderstood form. The Tieckian form, in Der gestiefelte Kater, to give one example, takes effect through satiric comedy; Death's Jest Book is satiric tragedy. The distinction is important. The concept of Romantic Irony explains the particular treatment in Death's Jest Book, with all its changes of direction, through tragedy to satire and undeveloped symbolism, yet artistically it is poor justification. In the final analysis it affords no more than an intellectual sense of unity of idea; the satire seems to destroy a perfectly adequate tragedy. There

It is  
used  
this.

can be little doubt that Beddoes would have found no alternative in rewriting but to keep to the Romantic Irony which is so viable to the play in its present form.<sup>61</sup> J

Death's Jest Book illustrates in a unique manner a practical application of Romantic Irony derived from several sources and models; and such is the final impression that it serves only to confirm the profound truth of August Wilhelm Schlegel's affirmation of Shakespeare's unconscious tact in his use of the ambiguous weapon, the irony called Romantic.

## B. Other Philosophical Influences

A second important theory of the Romantics deserves evaluation in the extent to which it may be applied to Beddoes' Jest Book: that of *Magische Idealismus*. [ Like Romantic Irony, this was a development of philosophical theory by a writer who was not himself nominally a philosopher, and though both find a common origin in the doctrines of Fichte, they diverge radically from this point.

Belief in the supreme power of the mind and the spirit is inherent in the Romantic creed; Fichte himself was a Romantic in his valuation of the Ich, and his work laid the foundation for an even greater faith in its transcendental nature. If Fichte's theories begin where Kant's leave off, Novalis's theory of Magic Idealism is an extension of Fichtean doctrine; more, it is an autonomous whole whose tendency is a new and bold affirmation of the spirit which goes far beyond its Fichtean origin. Novalis began with the study of Fichte, searching for the essence of the Fichtean Ich. His journals mark the moment of his actual discovery of "den

eigentlichen Begriff vom Fichteschen Ich". The inner world is a microcosm of the divine; the essence of philosophy is morality; the moral world of the Ich corresponds to the moral outer world of nature - "Die Welt ist ein Universaltropus des Geistes, ein symbolisches Bild desselben", he later wrote - thus, as Novalis interprets and develops the concept, mastery of one's own Ich is mastery of the whole external world.

Novalis's Ich is no longer constituted, like Fichte's, of pure reason and reasonable will. It is an organ of perception which can and should be developed to a point of actual domination of external circumstances.<sup>62</sup> The inner spirit is dynamic, and this dynamism, according to Novalis, realises itself through a type of plurality. The Ich creates within itself a Du, and through the interaction of the two there occurs "ein höchst geistiger und sinnlicher Umgang, und die höchste Leidenschaft ist möglich". When this inner correspondance and self-development is achieved it may impose itself on external nature, so that "die Gedanken verwandeln sich in Gesetze, die Wünsche in Erfüllungen".

This first stage of Magic Idealism presents an almost mystical conception of the Ich, yet there is an implicit practical aspect to Novalis's doctrine. He was more than an abstract philosopher: in typical late eighteenth and early nineteenth century manner he was creative writer, metaphysician, mathematician and man of science. His Magic Idealism is at once a philosophy of aesthetics<sup>63</sup> and the expression of a religious attitude:

Wir sind gar nicht Ich, wir können und sollen aber Ich werden, wir sind Keime zum Ich-werden. Wir sollen alles in ein Du, in ein zweites Ich verwandeln; nur dadurch erheben wir uns selbst zum grossen Ich, das eins und alles zugleich ist.

From this point, where life and death become united within the spirit and there is no barrier between Diesseits and Jenseits, spring the Hymnen an die Nacht.

In Death's Jest Book there is more than one passage influenced by a philosophy which is either Magic Idealism or one of Beddoes' own indistinguishable from it. Its appearance is confined, as will be seen, to specific speeches in which it is appropriate. The terms of these leave little room for doubt that this is Novalis's theory expressing itself in poetry. Beddoes was certainly acquainted with Kant and Fichte; he cannot have failed to read Novalis, since there is too much evidence of thinking along the lines of Novalis's in these two instances.

The speech of Ziba, l ii 59-71, goes beyond the limits of Fichtean idealism in a manner which is completely consistent with Novalis. Ziba himself is a mysterious figure; his origins and his function in the play have already been referred to:<sup>64</sup> he is the child of Life and Death, though his symbolic stature is never fully realised in the play. Yet this is how he announces the sighting of Wolfram's rescue expedition to Melveric, who has asked in plain terms if he has seen a Christian galley:

I looked abroad upon the wide old world,  
And in the sky and sea, through the same clouds,  
The same stars I saw glistening, and nought else.  
And as my soul sighed unto the world's soul,  
Far in the north a wind blackened the waters,  
And after that creating breath was still,  
A dark speck sat on the sky's edge: as watching  
Upon the heaven-girt border of my mind  
The first faint thought of a great deed arise,  
with force and fascination I drew on  
The wished sight, and my hope seemed to stamp  
Its shape on it. Not yet is it clear  
What, or from whom, the vessel.

The tenor of this speech is unique in the context, and clearly characterises Ziba's occult powers. What it describes is no less than the creative power of Magic Idealism: the conjunction of inner soul and world soul, of 1.62, under circumstances where heaven and earth are in harmony, as the image of lines 60 and 61 indicates, creates the ship. This is the "wished sight"; the wish becomes fulfilment, in Novalis's terms. Ziba's mind is "heaven6girt", an epithet significantly transferred from the external world of his contemplation; the speck "watches", waiting for his spirit to create it in the shape he desires.<sup>65</sup> The process of lines 63-4 is also very close to the transition moment of the Hymnen an die Nacht:<sup>66</sup>

da kam aus blauen Fernen - von den Höhen meiner  
alten Seligkeit ein Dämmerungsschauer....  
(Hymn 3)

The final line and a half is in keeping with the real tone of the scene, a fact which renders the rest of Ziba's speech all the more striking in its presentation of the ego-conditioned viewpoint that constitutes the metaphorical aspect of Magic Idealism.<sup>67</sup> Novalis  
106

As stated above, Novalis's theory was not restricted to this more or less aesthetic philosophy. As a scientist, he envisaged a practical application of this magic power of the self-developed communication of the moral will. While Beddoes looked as a pure scientist for dominion over life and death, Novalis began as a philosopher with a firm foundation of religious faith and from there expressed his belief that the mind, not rational scientific laws that Beddoes alone allowed validity, had actual power over the external physical world. "Mit der richtigen Bildung unseres Willens", he writes,

geht auch die Bildung unseres Könnens und Wissens fort. In dem Augenblick, wo wir vollkommen moralisch sind, werden wir ein Wunder tun können, d.i. wo wir keine tun wollen, höchstens moralische.

The more moral the spirit, the greater the harmony with the divine. In actual fact, Novalis's theories on these lines received no more confirmation from experience than did Beddoes',<sup>68</sup> but his stated beliefs are extremely interesting. This is Haym's commentary:<sup>69</sup>

Wie die Sprache und Gebärde unserem Denken gehorche, so, meint er [Novalis], müssen wir auch die inneren Organe unseres Körpers hemmen, vereinigen und vereinzeln lassen. Unser ganzer Körper sei schlechterdings fähig, vom Geist in beliebiger Bewegung gesetzt zu werden. Dann werde jeder sein eigener Arzt sein, der Mensch werde vielleicht sogar imstande sein, verlorene Glieder zu restaurieren, sich bloss durch seinen Willen zu töten und dadurch erst recht wahre Aufschlüsse über Körper, Seele, Welt, Leben, Tod und Geisterwelt erlangen u.s.w.

In general outline, this theory is not unique to Novalis; however, its terms of reference are significant. The mind, properly trained, can achieve literally anything, even the penetration of the secrets of life and death, simply because it has become divine. Novalis's theory immediately calls to mind the poetic function of Wolfram; however, the possible influence of Novalis in the presentation of Wolfram, and also of Sibylla, and of Ziba, must be set aside temporarily while the most contentious single passage of the entire play is examined in the light of Magic Idealism, a theory that seems to explain it more adequately than any other philosophical or scientific doctrine previously used as a key.

The passage in question is actually in two parts,



To pig add foresight, reason and such stuff,  
 And you have man. What shall we add to man,  
 To bring him higher? I begin to think  
 That's a discovery I soon shall make.  
 Thus I, owing nought to books, but being read  
 In the odd nature of much fish and fowl,  
 And cabbages and beasts, have I raised myself,  
 By this comparative philosophy,  
 Above your shoulders, my sage gentlemen.  
 (V 1 38-69)

Those who interpret this speech in terms of an early theory of evolution neglect the philosophical implications of crucial lines; those who interpret it in terms of standard philosophy alone neglect its scientific aspect. Both clearly belong to the same complex of ideas. The evolution theory is Colles's;<sup>70</sup> his interpretation is convincingly refuted by G.B. Potter,<sup>71</sup> who does not offer any alternative. What Potter alone concedes is that Beddoes was aware of the organisational hierarchy of nature (as a scientist), and uses it for poetic purposes. Nor does he refer to the early purveyor of an evolution theory, Lamarck, who posited the Will as performing the crucial function in the evolutionary process. This brings the question back to the philosophical science of the era without its offering a satisfactory means to interpretation of the speech.

Donner refers it to the philosophies of Kant and Fichte, the "will" being the Absolute Will of Kant, and the fiat section referring to Fichte's Ich, setting its own limits and constantly striving beyond them.<sup>72</sup> The Kantian influence in this sense could in fact be absorbed by the Fichtean, since Fichte in his late writings came full circle and posited an absolute Ich which assimilates to itself both finite ego and its created world.

The confusion surrounding the speech and its actual



basis thus resolves itself into two alternatives: is it the result of anatomical or of philosophical studies? Isbrand himself refers to his "comparative philosophy", and here, it would seem, is the key to the whole argument.

The entire process of Isbrand's self-development depends on a single fact: he is "but half created", and he strives to find the missing part of himself that precludes him from divinity. He has climbed the throne steps to find himself no nearer his real goal, and turns inward for guidance. The development must be within his own mind, or soul, and if he uses the word "will", this should not be fastened on as indicating Kant, or even Lamarck. "Therefore I fashioned / A will above my will, that plays upon it": the process he describes is that of Novalis; the ideal soul formed within the real soul elevates it towards the divine soul of the world, the "first soul" of l.54, through its own activity.

The description of the hierarchy of nature follows, but the actual detail is not the most important part of it. Beddoes is a scientist, describing the order of things in the accepted, hence non-evolutionary, sense. While he has shown interest in the transmigration of souls in the song "Squats on a toadstool" and in lines 40-42 of the present speech, the latter section does not return to this consideration; Isbrand is a man already, and looking upwards, not back. It is not the transitions from one form to another that concern him, for he seems to regard each as essentially separate, but rather the differences between them: "power of motion, senses and so forth" distinguish the lower animals from the plants; "reason and such stuff" distinguish man from beast. He lists these in the attempt to discover the missing element, that which will bring man higher. The soul he has named already, presumably regarding it as inherent

in all forms of life, but the solution is implied in man's ability to project a non-soul. The "evolutionary" passage is more or less a process of elimination, a recapitulation of his "comparative philosophy" which has led him to the above conclusion. In fact, he has already propounded the essential difference between man and his vision of superman, but without the knowledge of how this power is to be used. And in fact Isbrand's early death, or his disharmony with the moral world, prevents him from pursuing the matter to any conclusion.

The speech seems to fall apart at line 55: when Isbrand and Beddoes go back upon their reasoning when the conclusion has already been stated, hence the confusion in interpretation. The significance of the passage centres around the lines on the soul and the will; the conception of the second, it is obvious, contains more than Kant's. The philosophical influence is Novalis's Magic Idealism, which its originator regarded as the ultimate form of transcendental philosophy, the highest means of development of the divine essence of man.

*up there* The opening section of Part Three of the present study sought to establish Romantic Irony as an important philosophical influence in Leath's Jest Book, yet this is a mode of perception which conflicts with Magic Idealism. Romantic Irony represents a negation of the autonomy of the creative spirit, while Magic Idealism is its highest affirmation. Therefore the two could hardly exist side by side in a single play without the gravest disharmony. Yet they manage to remain within separate aspects of the plot and thought content, and Romantic Irony emerges as the more central means to the expression of Beddoes' vision. So far the influence of Magic Idealism has been discussed with reference to two passages

where it manifests itself in isolated speeches for a deliberately conceived purpose. In Isbrand's it is used less arbitrarily than in Ziba's, for Isbrand's speech, for total effect and character revelation, depends on a particular outlook which only this most radical transcendentalism can afford it. And since these passages are isolated it would seem that the influence of Magic Idealism did not go very deep. Unquestionably Beddoes lacked the deep religious faith behind Novalis's conception, and this temperamental difference precludes any more integral influence. Beddoes' own turn of mind inclined him to the ironic outlook.<sup>73</sup> This must be borne in mind in the interpretation of passages which seem to bear an ideological resemblance to Novalis's theory in its more far-reaching and also in its poetic aspects.

One of these is the resurrection of Wolfram, which appears to be a perfect poetic illustration of Novalis's own way to penetrate the world of the dead and discover the true interrelation of life and death. The resemblance, one feels, is entirely fortuitous, though a case might possibly be made for it. If Beddoes had rewritten the play as he suggested, with the resurrection postponed to Act V, and with Isbrand functioning as the instrument of earthly revenge, the concept of Romantic Irony might have been relegated to a lesser position, Mandrake reinstated as a purely comic figure, and the concept of Magic Idealism approximated to far more closely. Yet there would have been insurmountable difficulties in the equation of this with the satiric aim; the play would have required total reorientation of a kind which is not consistent with Beddoes' outlook. He is primarily an ironist with a satiric purpose - in his case the terms are not at variance, since irony is the

form and satire the content - whatever philosophical by-paths he is led into by individual characters or situations.

One of these may seem to be the development, particularly in IV ii, of the Wolfram - Sibylla theme. The presence of death between the two lovers and the language employed by Sibylla at some points recalls the situation and actual sections of the text of Novalis's Hymnen an die Nacht. For Sibylla the way to death is through love; though she does not know the mysterious monk is Wolfram, his words woo her:

Speak as at first you did; there was in the words  
A mystery and music, which did thaw  
The hard old rocky world into a flood,  
Whereon a swan-drawn boat seemed at my feet  
Docking on its blue billows; and I heard  
Harmonies, and breathed odours from an isle,  
Whose flowers cast tremulous shadows in the day  
Of an immortal sun, and crowd the banks  
Whereon immortal hunam kind doth couch.  
This I have dreamt before: your speech recalled it.  
(11.47-56)

And the opening lines of the sixth Hymn, "Sehnsucht nach dem Tode", bear a resemblance to Wolfram's words of IV ii 30-6. Sibylla's dedication to a love-death recalls the origin and process of the Hymnen an die Nacht; her death becomes an act of Magic Idealism without the religious connotations of Novalis's. Her attitude at Wolfram's bier expresses the same sentiments as Novalis's

Nun weint an keinem Grabe,  
Für Schmerz, wer liebend glaubt.  
Der Liebe süsse Habe  
Wird keinem nicht geraubt...  
(Hymn 5)<sup>74</sup>

Novalis's work and the Sibylla - Wolfram sections of Death's Jest Book constantly recall one another; several themes and motifs are present in both, though not

the Christian faith that informs and transforms the Hymnen. Frederick Pierce<sup>75</sup> argues persuasively for an affinity with Novalis, if not an actual influence, in these scenes, yet his arguments convince one that Beddoes writes more from a personal conviction of his own, developing in his maturity, which resembles rather the German attitude to love and death than any English tradition. It appears in this case that to imply the influence of the best known example in German, Novalis's Hymnen, falsifies the issue. The love-death theme in Beddoes' work predates his acquaintance with German, and it was a developing theme even then. The Brides' Tragedy has it; it is taken up in a fragment of The Last Man entitled "Dianeme's Death Scene".

"Dianeme's Death Scene" is the metaphysical link with Sibylla's longing for death; the elements present in it are developed in the later play to a degree approximating to Novalis's standpoint, with which Beddoes must have been familiar, though any influence could have been at most minimal. A common factor of the two Beddoes scenes is the image of flowers as death's emissaries,<sup>76</sup> and the dying words of "Dianeme, 1.50f., find a paler echo in such passages of Death's Jest Book as the deleted lines of Sibylla's speech at Wolfram's bier,<sup>77</sup> 1V ii 125f. and V iii 52f. "Dianeme's images and phrases, "infinity of azure", "billowy music", "the world to turn / Within my blue embrace", "'Round and around the curvous atmosphere/ Of my own real existence I revolve" and in particular the lines beginning, "All hail! I too am an eternity" seem to indicate that Beddoes was already more than capable of writing which shows a marked affinity to that of Novalis and the German Romantics. Thus any suggestion of actual influence of the Hymnen an die Nacht on passages of Death's Jest Book would have

to be qualified to such an extent that one could only allow an affinity of temperament on a very superficial level, a similarity of treatment in certain portions: that Beddoes had come close enough in the treatment of a poetic theme in his work to show a resemblance to the metaphysical outlook of Novalis.

However, there can be little doubt that the speeches of Isbrand and Ziba discussed above are unmistakably influenced by Novalis's specific theory of Magic Idealism in its philosophical outline as distinct from its use in the Hymnen, the reason for this being that the mystic and transcendental nature of the theory supplied Beddoes with a means to create atmosphere and character at two points in his drama.

### C. Literary Influences

Beddoes read widely and critically among German writers, to such an extent that by July 1830 he was able to express surprise at not having discovered sooner the work of Heinrich von Kleist, since, he writes, "I really believed I was acquainted with everything worth reading in German belles lettres, from the Niebelungen—lied down to Tiecks last novel".<sup>78</sup> References to German authors and their works abound in his letters, even and in fact especially in those written to his sister from his deathbed; it is not surprising, therefore, that some German influence should be found in his original writing.

However, it is necessary to be extremely careful in the tracing of this influence whose extent is not as great as might be expected from the range of his knowledge of German. The apparent influence of Novalis's

Lymnen an die Nacht has been shown to be questionable in view of tendencies already present in his earlier writing, and though it may seem probable that he wrote with Novalis in mind, this is not a demonstrable fact. The borrowings from German writers apart from the philosophical concepts of Romantic Irony and Magic Idealism discussed above will be seen to fall into one main category to which the first of these, though it predates Beddoes' departure from England, is a clear guide. In the case of Death's Jest Book, written in Germany to a theme with a German source, the actual events of the plot develop as they do for reasons of the author's own; apart from the use of Romantic Irony in its treatment there was little scope for any deep influence <sup>from</sup> ~~form~~ an external source.

In passing, reference must be made to a particular type of German influence at work in English literature accessible to Beddoes which had formed a certain tradition and is therefore outside the scope of the present study. This influence was that of the Gothic tale of terror, many of whose elements are to be found in Beddoes' earliest published works. English readers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were assailed by any number of works, both translations from the German and English imitations, which ran the whole gamut of mystery and horror: foetid caves, charnel houses, mysterious secret societies, ruined churchyards, evil monks, ancestral curses, spectral lovers and blood-bonds whose significance reaches beyond the grave.<sup>79</sup> Many of these were used by Beddoes and persist in a varying degree as late as Death's Jest Book. On the whole the English public remained unacquainted with the real literature and thought of the Germans.<sup>80</sup> The direct influences to which Beddoes was exposed in his reading

are the only ones to present a valid topic for study, but the fact that he was aware of the nature and existence of the sub-literature is attested to by his Raupach imitation "From the German". Significantly, Donner was unable to trace its origin: it seems to be a parody which is uncomfortably similar to some of Beddoes' own early writing.

We must now cut through the mass of conjecture and tradition and misunderstanding to evaluate exactly how much and how little Beddoes' work owes to individual German authors whom it is convenient to discuss in order of date of birth, since the oldest of these is Goethe, from whom Beddoes made his first borrowing as early as 1824.

Prior to his departure for the Continent, Beddoes is known to have translated some 120 lines of the Hibelungenlied and a section of Schiller's Philosophische Briefe; his reading comprised, according to his letters, various plays and poems of Goethe and Schiller.<sup>81</sup> In the opening scene of The Second Brother the following lines are spoken by Crazio:

Rosaura, this same night  
I will immortalise these lips of thine,  
That make a kiss so spicy. Touch the cup:  
Ruby to ruby! Slave, let it be thrown  
At midnight from a boat into mid sea.  
Rosaura's kiss shall rest unravished there.  
(ll. 15-20)

Rosaura is Crazio's mistress, and his fancy brings to mind what must have been its source: Goethe's lyric "Der König in Thule". The theme of the cup sanctified by its association with the mistress obviously caught Beddoes' imagination as a touch of dramatic embroidery he could add to the play then being composed just as, in The Brides' Tragedy, he had taken the idea of death from



poisoned flowers from Massinger. The value of each borrowing is exactly the same: each is a mere detail whose origin is immaterial, since dramatic effectiveness is the criterion.

The revised first act of Death's Jest Book concludes with the Song from the Waters, "The swallow leaves her nest", one of Beddoes' last poems.<sup>82</sup> It expresses a faith and resignation which came only to the poet in his mature years:

The swallow leaves her nest,  
The soul my weary breast;  
But therefore let the rain  
    On my grave  
Fall pure; for why complain?  
Since both will come again  
    O'er the wave.

The wind dead leaves and snow  
Doth hurry to and fro;  
And, once, a day will break  
    O'er the wave,  
When a storm of ghosts shall shake  
The dead, until they wake  
    In the grave.

These fourteen lines contain an extremely rich and condensed complex of ideas, perfect not only in the context but in themselves as a lyric. It is unmistakably Beddoes at his best, yet at the same time there is a remarkable resemblance to a lyric by Goethe, whom Beddoes appreciated as a lyricist rather than as the recognised colossus of German literature.<sup>83</sup> Goethe's "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern" - note the similarity of the title - begins

Des Menschen Seele  
Gleicht dem Wasser:  
Vom Himmel kommt es,  
Zum Himmel steigt es,  
Und wieder nieder  
Zur Erde muss es,  
Ewig wechselnd.

In Goethe's poem it is soul and water that return, in Beddoes' soul and swallow, though water/wave are an integral part of his poetic statement: the rain on the grave stands outside the dynamic process, yet seems almost a symbol of it. Goethe proceeds by the use of simile, Beddoes by an accumulation of statements and implications which in their relationship to one another assume the proportion of metaphor and ultimately fuse into a single symbol of resurrection in the cosmic order. The resemblances of the two lyrics are confirmed by their development. The second, third and fourth stanzas of Goethe's gradually weave soul and water into a single entity and achieve the same interpenetration of internal and external nature, or pathetic fallacy, as Beddoes' more concise statement. Detailed analysis of construction only tends to confirm the startling and consistent affinities in the development of the thought complex.

Nor is the second aspect of Beddoes' lyric absent from Goethe's:

Wind ist der Welle  
Lieblicher Buhler....

Seele des Menschen,  
Wie gleicht du dem Wasser!  
Schicksal des Menschen,  
Wie gleicht du dem Wind!

Wind and storm are the main symbols of Beddoes' second stanza: his wind/storm is exactly the wind/fate of Goethe; Beddoes' storm of ghosts is the force that resurrects the dead, the fate that achieves the return of the soul. Likewise the wind plays with the dead leaves and snow, which are surely a symbol of inner nature. In the matter of influence, one single reservation must be noted: Beddoes is concerned with a single resurrection, Goethe with a cyclic process. However, this does not

controvert the fact that there are a number of marked similarities in the two lyrics of the sort that would arise from a more or less unconscious reminiscence on Beddoes' part of Goethe's poem. One must, of course, bear in mind the qualifications of Beddoes' own One Word on Plagiarisms, and in fact Goethe's lyric poems of both Sturm und Drang and Classical periods express the same type of feeling for and attitude to nature ~~as~~ in the cosmos as those of the English Romantics, Beddoes included.

Does it not seem as if, at certain periods of the world, some secret influence in nature ~~was~~ was acting universally on the spirit of mankind, and predisposing it to the culture of certain sciences or arts, and leading it to the discovery even of certain special ideas and facts in these?

1 - The words are Beddoes' own,<sup>84</sup> and the number and type of the examples he cites shows that he was conscious of the problems of the phenomenon. Yet while these considerations explain why "Dianeme's Death Scene" has the same feeling as Goethe's "Ganymed" where no "influence" may be suggested, they do not explain away the correspondances between the two songs from the Waters. This instance, so far unnoticed by students of Beddoes' work, must therefore be recognised to have a viable claim to a place be<sup>8</sup>side the abdication scene and the extract from The Second Brother as another passage influenced by a specific German work.

1,3 Pierce<sup>85</sup> and Potter<sup>86</sup> claim as an influence on Death's Jest Book the second part of Goethe's Faust. In doing so, they make two fundamental errors. Pierce links the opening lines of the Fiat speech with Baccalaureus's lines towards the end of Faust II, II 1, which begin

Die Welt, sie war nicht, eh' ich sie erschuf...

In the following scene appears the character of the Homunculus, which Potter feels influenced Beddoes to add Mandrake to his play. Since Beddoes had also read Goethe's source for the creation of a Homunculus, Paracelsus, he had no need to derive this at second hand. The lines of Baccalaureus are intended as a satire of the philosophy of Fichte, a fact of which Pierce seems unaware. In addition, while some scenes of Faust II were published earlier, those in question did not appear until 1832, when both Isbrand's speech and Mandrake had already been completed and seen by the poet's English friends. This is one case where fact can controvert a tenuous theory. Beddoes' actual debt to Goethe is confined to two borrowings from the lyrics and, possibly, the placement of the scene at the inn at Ancona, II 1, for early relief like the Auerbachs Keller scene in Faust I. ~~But~~ Even here, however, it may be objected that Beddoes' scene is necessary to the development of the Mandrake sub-plot and could scarcely occur elsewhere. There may also be a hint in his particular conception of the character of Amala of Goethe's Kantian concept of the Schöne Seele; one of these is Iphigenia, and she appears in the only play of Goethe which Beddoes seems to have admired.<sup>87</sup>

*under this is his usual characteristic*

The connections between the works of Schiller and Death's Jest Book are more honoured by tradition than by critical textual appraisal. Walter Schirmer, whose work on German influence in English literature<sup>88</sup> excludes Beddoes for the good reason that he transmitted none, gives the single fact that Death's Jest Book contains "Anklänge an Schillers Geisterseher". Snow goes even further in claiming that the play has more than reminis-

cences: namely, two passages written under direct influence.<sup>89</sup> Donner disputes this claim.<sup>90</sup> On the surface at least there would seem to be a case for influence in one of the two sections indicated by Snow.

The first passage of Der Geisterseher concerns a seance in which the ghost of a dead man is conjured up to complete a dying message. However, amid apparent confusion, a second spectre appears. Snow seems to regard the second apparition as a real ghost, whereas the first was manifestly a fake and is exposed as such, hence the apparent similarity to Beddoes' resurrection scene. Yet after an interval in which the Sicilian tells a story Schiller makes it clear that the second ghost is part of a complicated plot against the prince, a second fake. Der Geisterseher is a novel of detection with all rationally explained rather than a Gothic Schauerroman. Of course, this is immaterial if, as has been claimed, Schiller's work suggested to Beddoes the dramatic possibilities of a double resurrection. Donner, on the other hand, finds an English source for Beddoes' scene in Act II scene I of Dryden's Indian Emperor. Here the High Priest conjures up his familiar spirit only to be confronted with three more accusing and unwelcome spectres from Montezuma's violent past. In view of the conjurer's dismay, Donner prefers to regard this scene as the more likely inspiration. However, if, as seems feasible, Mandrake is alive, he can hardly be regarded as the wrong ghost, if unwelcome, though this is not the main point at issue. Hence, while either or neither of the two earlier scenes, one English, one German, may have inspired Beddoes, there is also the third possibility that he simply extended the sub-plot independently of models to parallel events, particularly as he was able to add the dimension of Romantic Irony. If the ~~same~~

double resurrection of Death's Jest Book is to be taken as a deliberate borrowing from Schiller for a similar effect, that is, to make the second apparition more credible, support may be gained from the fact that more detailed affinities with Schiller's episode do exist. Ziba's elaborate preparations suggest those of the Sicilian! the long preamble in both cases fills a specific role. From the point of view of accessibility also it would seem that Schiller if anyone is the more likely source, since Schiller was one of the first German writers Beddoes read, and this about the time he was preoccupied with his obsession with death and the early stages of Death's Jest Book. Central as the resurrection was at this time, he could hardly have failed to remark what is the most striking passage of Der Geisterseher, so possibly it did first suggest to him to have Mandrake emerge from the tomb, further leading him to the ironic possibilities of the occurrence. In March 1826, prior to the discovery of Romantic Irony, Beddoes in fact wrote to Procter,<sup>91</sup> "I have given up Schiller he's never very original", so he may have read the episode before his decision to use Mandrake in III iii. Yet this can be no more than speculation, and there is more doubt in the matter, however convincing the arguments for influence, than Snow and Schirmer seem to indicate.

The second passage of the novella which Snow claims as an influence is entirely questionable. There are a great number of resemblances between Schiller and Beddoes which can only be accidental, resulting from the use of the same traditional themes, which is probably the very reason Beddoes tired of Schiller. Both, for personal reasons, are preoccupied with the theme of liberty, hence its appearance in their drama. Mario may be a Schillerian figure: witness his speech, III iii 114-43,

but Schillerian only in treatment, for Beddoes must have included him for reasons of his own. Both use also the motif of fraternal enmity: Schiller tragically in Die Braut von Messina and dramatically in Die Räuber; Beddoes in The Second Brother and Death's Jest Book.<sup>92</sup> In the latter it appears twice, but this is not the influence Snow claims. The Sicilian in Der Geisterseher tells a story of two brothers in love with the same woman. The favoured brother is murdered by the other and at the wedding feast the murdered man appears, heralded by a mysterious Franciscan monk. The monk disguise recalls Wolfram's vestment of IV ii,<sup>93</sup> but this is flimsy evidence for an influence. The monk's or pilgrim's guise was common in dramatic tradition for its concealing purposes: Melverio uses it, as does the duke in Measure for Measure. Even the connection - and it is no more than that - with a "Cain and Abel" scene in Schiller's work cannot persuade that Beddoes owes anything to the older writer. This is yet another of the resemblances in the independent development of a similar theme by two writers of which Schiller and Beddoes furnish more than one example. /

② // To Tieck Beddoes owes more than the theory of Romantic Irony. One and possibly three scenes in Death's Jest Book bear the influence of his writing. Act II scene III of Beddoes' play marks the transition of Isbrand from jester to power-seeker, from prose-speaker to verse-speaker. The public abdication is emphasised by more than the latter technical means; the relevant section of the scene was undeniably written under the influence of a portion of Scene I of Tieck's Ritter Blaubart. Tieck's example probably indicated to Beddoes the way to present the change more smoothly, yet it is from the contrasts rather than the likenesses in the

treatment of a single incident that the significance of Beddoes' Bearbeitung can be gauged.

Tieck's incident, or scena, if the convenient operative term may be used, occurs at the beginning of the play, thus its terms of reference cannot be extensive. In fact it hardly transcends its actual objective existence as a comic interlude. This of course is no criticism; as stated earlier, Tieck's satire is projected through a comic, Beddoes' through a tragic, vision; and comedy depends upon lightness of touch, the avoidance of portentousness. Tieck's Claus is essentially an amiable fool and a minor character, while Beddoes' Isbrand is none of these things, as the reader is well aware by Act II.

In the Tieck-inspired episode Beddoes reaches out through satire of the fool's insignia to the metaphysical and finally to a statement of one of the major themes of the play:

Yonder minister shall have my jacket; he needs  
many colours for his deeds....

O cap and bells, ye eternal emblems..... who  
shall be honoured with you?

I will yield Death the crown of folly.... Let  
him wear the cap, let him toll the bells....  
and, when the world is old and dead, the thin  
wit shall find the angel's record of man's works  
and deeds, and write with a lipless grin on the  
innocent first page for a title, 'Here begins  
Death's Jest Book'.

(II.93-117)

Compare this with Claus's testament:<sup>94</sup>

Aus meinem Warrenstock lässt sich ein herrlicher  
Kommandostab machen, man darf nur oben den  
Eselskopf herunterbrechen: den vermach' ich  
Euch!

Beddoes found the initial suggestion in Tieck, and this



origin remains recognisable, but the differing demands of his subject condition the treatment.

A second theme of Claus's speeches recall another section of Death's Jest Book which may owe its existence to Tieck:

O über die lumpige Welt! -- Wahrhaftig ich schäme mich jetzt, ich werde dafür bezahlt, um ein recht wahrer Narr zu sein, und nun bin ich ein Pfuscher gewesen, und war offenbar der verständigste von allen. Sie pfuschen dafür in mein Handwerk, und so ist kein Mensch mit seinem Stande zufrieden. Wollte nur Gott, ich könnte die Klugheit so wacker spielen, als sie sich in der Narrheit gut ausgenommen haben.

And of his wit, bequeathed to the counsellor, he says

So könnt Ihr immer noch Euren vernünftigen Rat damit flicken, denn ich glaube, dass Verstand kein besser Unterfutter finden kann, als Narrheit.

These two extracts have no parallel in Isbrand's abdication scene, but are exactly the two essentials of the vision expressed in the fragment "The Spirit of Folly" and incorporated into the c version of Act 1.<sup>95</sup> There may not be direct influence, since, it must be stressed, though Beddoes borrowed constantly from works which shared some aspect of his attitude to the world, for the rest he was widely read and a poet in his own right. The fragment postdates the first versions of Death's Jest Book and brings into prominence themes already implicit in the play; Tieck's contribution cannot be assessed, and if there is any, it was made at a much later date than the first one even though both are from the same scene of the same play. However, it must be allowed that the basis of each situation is the same. In "The Spirit of Folly" Mandrake introduces the subject of the confusion of folly and wisdom, and like Claus he is

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renouncing his fool's title to go off on affairs of "wisdom". Isbrand's response is of a piece with it. In both writers the suggestion is of a confused standard of values, of a changing world where no man knows his place. The difference is that this vision pervades Beddoes' entire play. A few lines of Tieck contain all the themes developed by Beddoes in parts of two scenes: the initial impulse is Claus's desire to make his will, and both he and Isbrand after him use the opportunity to indulge in differing kinds of satirical comment. Mandrake's dialogue with Isbrand develops one aspect of the satire. It is noteworthy that there is no single point in which the actual bequests, or the satiric comments, correspond, certainly no hint of a translation, yet this is an undeniable instance of a German influence.

One of Tieck's serious works, his chronicle play Genoveva, is mentioned for the first time by Beddoes in 1827,<sup>96</sup> that is, a year after his statement that the play is finished in the rough.<sup>97</sup> In view of this, it may only be a coincidence that Death's Jest Book IV iii contains what seem like similarities to the scene in Genoveva in which Golo serenades the heroine from the garden. The similarities are of the type which could result unconsciously from Beddoes' having composed his scene about the time of reading the other, which could easily have been the case. Similarities in the development of the plot are there in the first place: Golo's situation in relation to Genoveva is very like that of Athulf vis à vis Amala; on the physical level, the man in each case is in the garden, the woman above in her apartment - Genoveva is actually on a balcony; it is night. Such correspondances could be explained by the conventional nature of the scenes, yet each marks a turning point in the destiny of the man concerned.

In addition, the two scenes follow the same pattern for the first thirty or so lines. Each opens with a soliloquy from the lover, upon which the woman's presence is perceived:

Athulf: O! beauty, beauty!  
Thou shed'st a moony night of quiet through me.

Golo: Sie schimmert wie ein neuer Sternenhimmel,  
Ein neuer Mond ist sie emporgestiegen.

And in Tieck's scene, Genoveva's first words after Golo's soliloquy express the same pathetic fallacy as Athulf's lines:

Wie sanft der Mondschein auf dem Grase spielt,  
Wie süß das Herz sich nun beruhigt fühlt.

There is nothing particularly original about the imagery, but the sequence of the likenesses of the two passages leaves the impression that this cannot be entirely accidental, though both may be independent Romantic versions of the most celebrated of all balcony scenes.<sup>98</sup>

[Beddoes' debt to the other older German Romantics belongs largely to the other sections of Part Three of the present study, but <sup>there</sup> a reference <sup>should</sup> must be made to two borrowings from <sup>another play by Sch. Rom.</sup> them which, strictly speaking, are no more than that, since they are found in the two prefaces to Death's Jest Book and thus are not assimilated or restyled to serve the purpose of artistic creation, as are the foregoing examples. The Preface of 1828<sup>99</sup> takes up A.W.Schlegel's analogy from the first of the Vorlesungen über dramatische Literatur und Kunst of the northern drama and Gothic architecture. This Beddoes takes a stage further to suit the nature of his own play. Notably, he makes a point of the gargoyles, the medieval symbols of the grotesque, the evil and the dislocated in the moral world. The Fragment of a New Preface<sup>100</sup>

begins with a paraphrase of Novalis. This preface is only a few lines long; it seems to be the opening of a restatement of the three classes of drama distinguished by Schlegel in his lectures. However, such borrowings, acknowledged in both cases, are of little importance, *except in the implication of the latter.*

The works of the younger Romantics are the main subject of Frederick Pierce's article on German influence in Beddoes, and they may be dealt with together, since here the problems attendant upon the establishment of viable German influence proliferate. In the course of his article, Pierce brings in a large number of tempting examples, which on closer examination seem to prove no more than an affinity of thought which caused English readers of Beddoes to dismiss apparent obscurities in his work as the result of contact with "German metaphysics".<sup>101</sup> Pierce writes,<sup>102</sup>

We are looking for characteristics in German works which might naturally have affected an author who unquestionably read them, even if the traits simply accentuated something already dormant in his mind, even if they simply re-awakened or intensified memories of his English models.

A sweeping thesis, this, and one that leads into very delicate considerations: he is prepared to allow affinities a validity that properly belongs only to real influences. In fact, some of Pierce's examples are too nebulous to count as either, and the real and provable influence of Tieck is not even referred to. Nor does he mention Novalis's theory of Magic Idealism.

Two examples from German authors cited by Pierce show up the weakness of the basic argument as quoted above, and serve as an instructive tailpiece to a study of German influence in Beddoes. In the first case he

links Hoffmann's interest in the transmigration of souls with Isbrand's Fiat speech of V i. Beddoes had no need to go to Hoffmann or any other German writer for this with Pythagoras as his inspiration, Pythagoras who, moreover, is expressly mentioned in connection with "squats on a toadstool", a poeticising of the same theme. While it would be odd if Beddoes had not read at least some of Hoffmann, it would be absurd to claim, as Pierce's thesis suggests, that a reading of his work caused Beddoes to base two passages of his play on a scientific theory with which he was already familiar. The second mistaken contention associates the incident in Arnim's Kronenwächter in which two men undergo blood transfusion with an apparent change of personality with Isbrand's words to Wolfram,

O fie on 't!..... Say when hast thou undergone  
transfusion, and whose hostile blood now turns  
thy life's wheels?

(1 i 240-2)

Beddoes' interest in the blood-bond precedes by many years his real German studies<sup>103</sup> and it is a recurrent theme in the plays of the Dane Oehlenschläger which he admired. As a medical student he would have been acquainted with the question of blood transfusion, first attempted in the seventeenth century and taken up again in Berlin by the surgeon Dieffenbach in the early years of his own century.<sup>104</sup> Hence he must also have been aware of the superstition surrounding the giving and taking of blood.<sup>105</sup> The lines in Death's Jest Book must therefore have been inspired by his own scientific knowledge, and not by the secondary source of Arnim's novel, again despite Pierce's thesis. Likewise with the question of the Mandrake in Arnim's Isabella von Aegypten. Such considerations tend to shed suspicion, perhaps a little unjustifiably, on the whole of Pierce's article.

However, it must be stated that on the whole it is based on a series of false premises and faulty arguments. /

To sum up, the palpable literary influences in The Second Brother and Death's Jest Book, as distinct from the philosophical and technical, will be seen to be few in number and on the whole unquestionable. The borderline cases, such as that of Schiller's Geisterseher may or may not be acceptable, according to one's own interpretation of scenes which in both are ambiguous. However, they deserve inclusion in a discussion, whereas serious and extensive study makes it imperative to discard such possible "influences" or "affinities" as cannot be supported by rationally presented evidence. Impressive though a long list of names of German authors might be, it does not seem that the number can be extended very far beyond that given by Donner in his critical biography of the poet.<sup>106</sup>

#### D. Technical and Linguistic Influences

In the unfinished preface to Death's Jest Book, Beddoes refers to the distinction between three types of drama, Classical, Shakespearian and Spanish, which was a real one to the German Romantic critics. Beddoes himself was acquainted with all three, since he read Calderon shortly after taking up residence at Göttingen.<sup>107</sup> His own Jest Book, like all its predecessors, was conceived and executed in the "old English or Shakespearian" style, as he calls it: the one most suited to his purpose and talents. However, in the revisions of Act 1, the c version, the nature of the changes and expansions indicate the influence of another style which he had come to see as appropriate to and capable of expressing the diffuse

and excursive nature of his thought.

This is no less than the technique of Calderon's dramas, adapted by Tieck in his own chronicle plays Kaiser Octavianus and Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva; it must be stated at the outset that as this style was largely absorbed from a German modification of the Spanish original it must count as German. An examination of Tieck's method in these chronicle dramas and of Beddoes' new treatment of the material already set down in the ab version shows that Beddoes was consciously working on a new dramatic technique, in which increased length both of scene and play as a whole is offset by deliberately balanced contrasts of character and mood within a scene. Since in Beddoes' case the actual scene content and sequence was already fixed, there is no juxtaposition of scenes on the basis of mood contrasts as in Tieck, but the additional lyrics of the c version are all intended to emphasise the mood prevailing in their context. Contrast and mood: these are the salient structural principles of the technique Beddoes applied over the more rigid English form in the revisions of Act 1 by drawing out tendencies already present.

The prose opening of Act 1 scene 1 is not only extended but in some cases altered where this seems at first glance unnecessary. Thus "dear Mandrake" becomes "dainty Homunculus":<sup>108</sup> the term evokes specifically the magic arts Mandrake intends to practise and of which he speaks in altered passages of the opening which now impress this fact.<sup>109</sup> Thus the character is fixed more precisely than before, and the "Spirit of Folly" extract sets Isbrand beside Mandrake, the better to distinguish the two, since Isbrand adds the intellectual and satirical response to Mandrake's speech and song. The passage

may have been inspired by Tieck,<sup>110</sup> but whatever its origin it emphasises early in the play and provides a focal point for the theme of folly that runs through the later acts. In making his revisions Beddoes had the advantage of knowing what he had already written into later scenes, and what needed to be developed.

Every bypath is also more fully explored in the revised scenes: in the first, for example, Mandrake's interruption of Wolfram<sup>111</sup> is extended into a passage resembling the folly dialogue. Mandrake introduces the animal metaphor to which Isbrand adds an overtone of political satire.<sup>112</sup> The loose epic form permits this type of expansion in which each motif is developed in passing for its own sake. There is no subordination to structure as it is traditionally conceived.

With the Isbrand-Wolfram exchange comes an outstanding illustration of the use of the "contrast" technique, since many lines are rewritten to point the difference between the two brothers which was less apparent in the ab text. Isbrand's affirmation of vengeance<sup>113</sup> has a new and more powerful climax; Wolfram is depicted more positively in his misdirected charity<sup>114</sup>; and Isbrand is shown as almost beside himself with scorn for Wolfram, cynicism, and something akin to tragic desperation.<sup>115</sup> The new Song ~~from~~<sup>from</sup> the Ship and Isbrand's final speech in conjunction serve to end the scene on a more dramatic note than previously.

The second scene has fewer additions, yet a comparison of the two texts shows that these are all designed to a specific end: to give greater depth and truth of feeling, particularly in the depiction of Sibylla's love for Wolfram both before and at his entrance, and in Melveric's growing awareness that the loss of Sibylla will destroy him. His vital speech<sup>116</sup> is rewritten



with more attention to psychological truth.

The new opening of scene iii has already been discussed;<sup>117</sup> its intention is maximum dramatic effect. The following events are interrupted by Mandrake's entry, added in the c version, and a series of riddling puns. This interpolation serves no purpose at all, unless to juxtapose the comic and the serious as in life, and perhaps even as a touch of Romantic Irony in the melodramatic situation.<sup>118</sup> In a and b Mandrake and his boy only appear at the beginning of scene iv, and in c this passage too is amplified so that the imperilled Melveric is neglected in favour of a farcical scene with two comic songs. Each addition extends an already lengthy act, yet without creating the feeling that it is superfluous. This passage, for example, is a virtuoso bit of comedy and wit for which the play is all the better. In addition, it offsets the mood of the rest of the scene, though its effect on the "serious" action seems deleterious. However, having led the plot away from the main aspect, Beddoes recreates the prevailing atmosphere in an exchange that bridges the two main sections of the scene, and does this far more tellingly than before. He presents the dialogue of the fishermen and their evocative song, "As mad sexton's bell".

The chronicle style develops the climax of the act with new skill. When he wrote in the Shakespearian manner of the ab version, Beddoes crowded his stage with characters, his plot with details and ornamentations that ended to obscure the main issue.<sup>119</sup> His deliberate adoption of a looser form permitted each theme to be developed in a more leisurely fashion, so that such sections as the Isbrand-Mandrake dialogues and the scene between Mandrake and his boy seem no longer intrusions

or baroque excrescences but integral parts of the text. Lines which formerly commanded only fleeting attention have been extended into the expression of some aspect of Beddoes' mind and thought, and for this reason deserve a response. In the c version, moreover, the lyrics are living and vital to the presentation of mood; nowhere more so than in the last hundred lines or so of the act, where they crystallise and reflect the drama of events more effectively than any dialogue, certainly more surely than the dialogue they replace. By comparison the lyrics of the final four acts are ornamental interludes, Wolfram's Dirge of II ii and Isbrand's Harpagus ballad of IV iv and V iv possibly excepted.

The c version of Act I shows Beddoes' grasp of the fundamentals of a new and perhaps more congenial dramatic style, one which turns diffuseness to good account. The fact that he did not continue this large scale revision may indicate an inability to face the restyling of the last four acts whose treatment is conditioned by the form: that is, the revenge plot may not have been adaptable to a less rigid structure. His vision, too, had undergone fundamental changes. Whatever the reason, one can only regret that the c version was not completed, for the new Act I shows Beddoes' ability to reshape his original material to a style not thought of at the time of Death's Jest Book's conception, a style learnt from his contact with German literature.

Of linguistic influences, there is little to record. The English influence is more tangible in his German writings than the German in his English, and the latter does not show the same dislocation of native idiom as Weber found in the political speeches, articles and

poems.<sup>120</sup>

It may be discernible in such lines as Ziba's

..... the accused innocent did pray  
The dead...  
To rise and speak him free,<sup>121</sup>

where a double Teutonicism seems perceptible in the use of the adjective "dead" as a singular noun, and in the un-English "speak him free", apparently a literal translation of the German freisprechen. However, the richness of Beddoes' poetic idiom makes it difficult to establish linguistic influences which, if they are present, only help to fortify it, as in the example cited. So too do his German-inspired adverbs:

Therefore he clings to me so ivily<sup>122</sup>

and in one of the play's lyrics, "As mad sexton's bell", the compelling momometric lines:

Night's dumbness breaks rolling  
Ghostlily:  
So our boat breaks the water  
Witchingly.

The second stanza has "ghostlily" and "moonily". These are the "heavy ringing dactyls" to which Donner refers.<sup>123</sup> In the Song from the Waters, "As sudden thunder", there can be found an expression which would seem to have its origin in German Romanticism: "magic wonder".

These Teutonicisms are not readily apparent, and they are far from incongruous. In fact it would be difficult to say how and in what passages any pejorative effect of Beddoes' prolonged stay in Germany may be remarked in his English poetry, either in Death's Jest Book or later. All the German influences discernible in Beddoes' work, from philosophy and literature, both technical and ideological, seem to have been assimil-

ated without strain into what was already an established, if unusual, mode of thinking and writing.

### Notes

- 1 These cover the period up to his death. For a summary of the critical attitudes expressed, see Forster's article, T.L.Beddoes' views on German Literature, English Studies Vol. 30, 1949.
- 2 See Donner, TLB, Ch.VIII p.212f., text and footnotes.
- 3 F.W.Stokoe, in his book German Influence in The English Romantic Period defines it in the preface p.vif. as "the modification of the consciousness by action from without; and such action, to become effective, must have had the way prepared for it by previous tendencies in the consciousness concerned", which is a more detailed way of making the same essential point.
- 4 See pp. 31-4 above.
- 5 These terms were used for the first time in English by Bishop Connop Thirlwall in his essay of 1833 "On the Irony of Sophocles". To some extent he was only applying terminology to a dramatic practice well known in English lit.
- 6 The term is Aristotle's.
- 7 Of Irony, especially in Drama, University of Toronto Press, 1948, p.13.
- 8 Oedipus Rex furnishes a number of excellent examples.
- 9 Op. cit. ch. 4.
- 10 Letter to Kelsall, January 11th 1825.

- 11 The Brides' Tragedy, cf. Dedictory Letter.
- 12 Cf. E.Sackville West's review of a production of the play on BBC radio, *New Statesman*, May 10th 1947, p.333.
- 13 Melveric in disguise has a certain similarity to Shakespeare's Duke: cf.note 20 below.
- 14 For an explanation of this apparent contradiction in terms, see Part Three § below and the discussion of Dramatic Irony in l iii c version, p.120below.
- 15 This motif recalls Scaroni.
- 16 ab 305-13; c 363-77. The c version is not only longer but more subtly handled.
- 17 l iv 192-3, c. Cf. ab which differs markedly.
- 18 Cf. Donner, TLB,p. 221.
- 19 l i 152f.; l\ iv 194.
- 20 ll iii 278-86. This is partly Beddoes' own preparation for the introduction of a conventional theme, of course.
- 21 ll 24-330.
- 22 l.26f.
- 23 ll.80-81.
- 24 Cf. p.81f. above and p.141 below.
- 25 p.142ff. below.
- 26 The terms of this show how little credence Beddoes placed in it as an objective fact.
- 27 See p. 145f. below.
- 28 Melveric's lines 648-50 are a fragment incorporated into the scene. This is an error of taste in the context; Beddoes appears to have written these lines while dissociated from the real tone of the events which follow.
- 29 ll. 3-19.

- 30 IV 1 91-106; V iv 239-45.
- 31 Melveric's return to his forgotten wife, introduced no earlier than III iii, does not seem to suggest a return to his real love, but rather a despairing regression to a former, wished-for, state of comparative happiness, since he realises he has nothing left but lonely exile or death. Even his sons have turned against him, and the development of his character after the murder of Wolfram indicates that he has not only lost his soul but with it his interest in life.
- 32 II. 31-34.
- 33 Cf. V iv 48.
- 34 Op. cit., p.4.
- 35 Lyzeumfragment II 61f. and 143.
- 36 Die Romantische Schule, Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1928, p.296.
- 37 Cf. Sedgwick, op. cit. p.17 for a summary.
- 38 Die Romantik, Part 1, p.279. (Pub. Haefel, Leipzig, 1931).  
 Nicht naturlos, aber naturfrei ist der wahrer Ironiker. Er hat die Fähigkeit, sich von dem irdischen Element, in dem er lebt und webt, zu lösen, als ein Luftschiffer emporzusteigen und die Erde als winzigen Punkt unter sich verschwinden zu sehen, die verhältnismässige Nichtigkeit der lebenden Angel zu erkennen, die... sich so breit machte und unermesslich ausdehnte. Auf Erden schon eine solche Ansicht. ~~xx~~ haben können wie ein seliger Geist, der mit ätherischem Leib, ein wehendes Lüftchen, über den tosenden Markt des Lebens hinstreicht.  
 An exaggerated example of "imaginative" literary criticism, to which Romantic Irony lends itself.
- 39 Quoted by A.E. Lussky, Tieck's Romantic Irony, University of North Carolina Press, 1932, p.30.
- 40 Lussky discusses this in detail, op. cit, ch.1.

- 41 Busby traces its ancestry through Sterne,  
which is instructive. See op.cit., ch.4.
- 42 Vorlesungen etc., Lecture XVll.
- 43 The Preface to DJB contains a paraphrase of  
Lecture 1. Cf.p.177 below.
- 44 Op. cit., p.5.
- 45 Cf. letters of April 20th and May 21st 1827,  
partly quoted p.31f. above.
- 46 Letter to Walsall, January 16th.
- 47 See passage preceding that quoted from Lecture  
XXlll.
- 48 For an example of the unsuccessful mixture, see  
Otway's Venice Preserv'd.
- 49 Cf. Snow, p.115 - "a herald, the flimsy-witted  
Mandrake, so easily dislodged from death".  
Donner seems to assume the cudgelling of Act 11  
scene 1 restores him to life.
- 50 There are so many inversions and subordinate  
clauses that the sense is ambiguous. "Broke  
it to pieces" could be taken as an inversion,  
"it" then refers, like the last "it" of the  
preceding clause, to the pot.  
However, this is a tenuous and unconvincing way  
to make a case for what the present writer is  
sure is intended. One might ask the question,  
what evidence is there that Mandrake is dead?  
and the matter assumes a new perspective.  
The Boy's lines 11 i 54-5 also support the  
theory that he is initiating an involved joke.
- 51 Introduction to 1950 ed. of Plays and Poems,  
p.xxxviii.
- 52 111 111 23.
- 53 See Works, footnote to pp.430-1.
- 54 Cf. Donner, TLB, p.237.  
"The only danger of Homunculus Mandrake is that  
he makes the other characters look not a little  
absurd, and the very purpose of his introduc-  
tion in the conjuring scene may thus be defeated,

for there can be little doubt that Beddoes made us laugh at Mandrake lest we should laugh at Wolfram, and that would not do." While issue must be taken with the last part of this, the first is certainly correct.

- 55 Op.cit., chapters 3 and 4.
- 56 Cf. letter to Kelsall of April 20th 1827.
- 57 "We have bathed", "Maiden, thou sittest alone above" and "A cypress-bough and a rose-wreath sweet".
- 58 In this light it is interesting to compare the reception of a work by the poet's father "of an irony so subtle that it was in danger at times of being mistaken for real panegyric" by his friend Dr. Darwin, who suggested for the sake of the reader "the use of a new mark of punctuation to ~~suggest~~ indicate irony". - F.L.Lucas, The Case of Dr. Beddoes, Life and Letters, Vol.IV, no.20, Jan.1930.
- 59 Cf. note 5 above. Thirlwall's ironies were, irony of detachment (=more or less Romantic Irony), irony of fate/circumstance, and tragic/dramatic/Sophoclean irony.
- 60 TLB, p.243.
- 61 Although he did think of postponing the resurrection and thus lean more upon symbolism, he also kept extending Mandrake's part in the drama; how these two facts were to be reconciled, probably Beddoes himself could not tell.
- 62 Instinct or genius are the primal forces of his Ich, while reason, understanding and so on - the conscious processes - are secondary.
- 63 See Hayward, Novalis: the Veil of Imagery, The Hague, Mouton & Co. 1959, especially pp. 9-11 and ch.1. This interpretation restricts the function of Magic Idealism in a way its creator did not intend.
- 64 P.93f. above.
- 65 Cf. note on the reversed image, 67 below.



- 66 This quotation from the Hymnen refers to a specific death-awareness; however there is a valid point of comparison in the fact that both concern the moment of attunement to the soul of the universe, i.e. the breaking down of the traditional time/space barriers.
- 67 Cf. Novalis's statement  
Wenn ihr die Gedanken nicht unmittelbar (und zufällig) vernehmbar machen könnt, so macht doch umgekehrt die äussern Dinge unmittelbar (und willkürlich) vernehmbar - welches ebensoviel ist als: wenn ihr die Gedanken nicht zu äussern Dinge machen könnt, so macht die äussern Dinge zu Gedanken.... Beide Operationen sind idealistisch. Wer sie beide vollkommen in seine Gewalt hat, ist der magische Idealist.
- 68 It appears that the mind may in fact have real power over the ills of the flesh, according to one scientifically observed incident. See In my Mind's Eye, by Frederick Marion, London, Rider, p.137.
- 69 Op.cit., p.420-1.
- 70 Introduction to his edition of Beddoes' works.
- 71 Did Thomas Lovell Beddoes believe in the Origin of the Species? Modern Philology, August 1923, vol.xxi, pp.89-100.
- 72 , TLB, p.234.
- 73 Cf. himself as expressed in correspondence.
- 74 Cf. Sibylla's lines ll ii 45f.
- 75 Op.cit., pp.127-8.
- 76 Cf. "Diameme" l.31f. and DJB V iii 34f.
- 77 Works, p.399 footnote.
- 78 Letter to Kelsall, July 19th.
- 79 This type of literature is difficult to procure, but a glance at available texts is sufficient: Horrid Mysteries, Lenore, Götz, Udolpho, The Monk etc. On the serious literary level, apart from Götz there are several plays of Kleist

and Schiller which use these themes, to give only two examples. A comparison with a modern work in this genre, Isak Dinesen's Seven Gothic Tales is interesting.

- 80 Cf. note 7 to Part One.
- 81 See undated letter, Works, no.xviii and letter of March 25th 1825.
- 82 See Works, Introduction, p.xl. Donner is unable to date it with any certainty, but it was written before 1844.
- 83 Cf. undated letter xviii and others. Feller sees Beddoes' attitude as nothing less than heretical.
- 84 Letter to Procter, April 19th 1829.
- 85 Op.cit., p.130.
- 86 Op.cit., p. 99.
- 87 Undated letter xviii.
- 88 Der Einfluss der deutschen Literatur auf die Englische im 19 Jahrhundert, Halle-Saale, Niemeyer, 1927.
- 89 Op.cit., p.167f.
- 90 <sup>217<sup>n</sup></sup> TLB, p.225 and note. Cf. Donner's report
- 91 Prose appended to verse letter.
- 92 Donner, TLB, p.235, says Isbrand and Wolfram recall the brothers Moor of Die Räuber, but this is an illustration rather than a suggestion of influence.
- 93 Hinted by lines 30-1.
- 94 Tieck's play has no line numbers.
- 95 L i 45-87.
- 96 Letter to Kelsall, April 20th.
- 97 This statement was made in October 1826 in

a letter dated the 18th of the month. Compare, however, the letter of April 1st. 1826 in which Beddoes states that he is working on Act IV; this is almost exactly a year.

98 Romeo and Juliet, ll 11 - "and Juliet is the sun".

99 Given in Works, p.530f.

100 Works p.535.

101 The term is Barnette Miller's, op.cit.  
Cf. also Beddoes' answer to Procter's criticism of the play, letter of April 19th 1829.

102 Op.cit., p.126.

103 Cf. Scaroni, also remarks p.165 above on German tradition in English Gothic literature.

104 This information is contained in a note to the relevant section of Arnim's novel, p.117 of Vol. I of the edition of the Bibliographisches Institut, Leipzig, no date given.

105 This superstition persists today in underdeveloped areas, one of which is the Australian administered territory of New Guinea. Natives will not take blood from a member of another sex, tribe or race because of its supposed influence. Medical science presumably knows of many such cases.

106 TLB, pp.251-2.

\* 107 See Weber, Appendix E.

108 ab 1.15, c 1.18.

109 Cf. 1.14f., 1.25f.

110 See p.175f. above.

111 1.103f.; cf. ab 68f.

112 11.125-29 seem to refer to the French Revolution and the following period of Napoleon. If so, this is Isbrand's view, not Beddoes'.

113 1.207f.

- 114 Cf. ab 134-141 and c 225-233, ab 167-172  
and c 258-267.
- 115 1.281f.
- 116 c 363f.; cf. ab 306f.
- 117 See p.120 above.
- 118 This contention takes into account the purpose  
of Romantic Irony as conceived by Beddoes in  
his letter quoted p. 139-40 above and by  
Schlegel in the second extract quoted on p.  
137-8 above.
- 119 At this late stage, this begs the question.  
The actual determination of the main issue  
depends upon one's own interpretation of the  
play, but the present work takes it to be  
the Isbrand story; this may underestimate the  
importance of the Wolfram-Melveric aspect of  
the plot which certainly dominates the con-  
clusion if not the earlier scenes. "The  
main issue" could therefore be defined as the  
whole revenge complex about Isbrand, Wolfram  
and Melveric, including the independent dev-  
elopment of the figure of Isbrand.
- 120 Op.cit., p.211ff.
- 121 111 iii 260-2.
- 122 IV i 47.
- 123 TLB p.251.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the present work has been threefold: to document and interpret where necessary the life of the poet of Death's Jest Book, to interpret from several angles this compendious and unique dramatic creation, and to establish to what extent its composition bears traces of the non-English background.

The German influence can be seen to be inconsistent in its effect, emerging in isolated scenes, in a lyric or two, and in philosophical attitudes which form part but not the entire picture of Beddoes' personal vision. It is not as superficial as Snow believes it to be,<sup>1</sup> since he underestimates the value and use of Romantic Irony; ] though his judgment may depend upon the interpretative standpoint adopted vis a vis the complex Jest Book. It may be interpreted, as he seems to interpret it, in terms of the themes of love and death/the grotesque; or, in the terms of the present study, those of death and the ironic viewpoint, the second of which embraces Beddoes' philosophical and satirical vision. In this interpretation, which seems to be a truer one, Romantic Irony is seen as a valid force.

Death's Jest Book is the product of a speculative and lively intellect which drew incidentally in the course of composition on English and German literary sources, on science, medicine, palaeontology, astronomy, alchemy, and many other branches of learning. Thus all are "influences"

to a certain extent, but the German, in view of the circumstances of the play's composition, deserves particular attention. In many ways it is central to the play. The main tone of the macabre is Beddoes' alone, created from contact with Elizabethan and Jacobean writers, with the anglicised German sub-literature of the terror school; and from his own experience. To all these insidious forces, Romantic Irony offered a partial corrective of indeterminable value as well as a means to creating the macabre tone;<sup>2</sup> German transcendental philosophy offered a way to express a creed he held independently of Romanticism in general and derived from the needs of his own personality. Contact with German thought helped the poet to come to terms with life itself, which in turn seems to have allowed him to complete Death's Jest Book as a fairly coherent statement. Thus if its importance to Beddoes himself seems greater than its apparent contribution to his work, this does not, however, invalidate the critical standpoint, for traces of Romantic Irony, to give a single instance, may be detected in the play. As for the inspirations Beddoes may have gained from literary sources, their number and nature cannot be established with mathematical certainty. At one extreme it may be assumed, on his own evidence, that he read everything worth reading: Pierce's assumption;<sup>3</sup> and therefore anything remotely resembling his own thought may have inspired him. This is patently nonsense. In these matters it is best to take the middle course and evaluate each case on its merits. The results seem to indicate an unsystematic borrowing of the right idea for the particular scene or situation, as would naturally be expected. Each is subordinated to the pattern of the whole. The apparent borrowing from Tieck's Genoveva, which seems to be a unique instance of

its kind, must be an unconscious reminiscence; the seeming parallel with the Goethe lyric in "The swallow leaves her nest" may be another such. The German influence does in fact seem to colour the play, particularly if the full realisation of the folly theme is to be attributed to German inspiration; without this background Death's Jest Book would not be the play it is. If this is to be the criterion of judgment, the German influence is far from superficial.

All this discussion is essentially discussion of a symptom, and in this concluding section it would be as well to consider briefly the causes underlying Beddoes' form of what has been named for all time the Romantic Agony. Death's Jest Book is the product of an age. The essence of the Romantic problem is the search for a personal identity; the symbol of it, the aeolian harp. These two facts point the way to the crux of the matter. The clue is to be found in the nature of the philosophy of the age. It betrays the tendency of its thought, for no philosopher is an opinion-maker; the terms of his doctrine simply reveal the prevailing temper of the times. Thus it is, for example, that the eighteenth century philosopher Kant is concerned with the state, the general will, the Ding an sich: fixed values from which his philosophy gains a solidity, an ethical sense: in fact, a sense of identification with externals. And thus it is that his disciple Fichte, the figurehead adopted by the Romantics, rejects the Ding an sich and all noumena in favour of the Ich. He has no mass ethos, for the non-Ich, the external, only exists in terms of the Ich. The individual is the centre of the cosmos. Fichtean philosophy systematises the spiritual malaise of the period, the fact that each individual is alone as far as the choice of values and a life-style <sup>is</sup> are con-

cerned. He is in the position symbolised by the aeolian harp. For some, Novalis for example, there was the saving grace of religious faith; but for Beddoes there was not.

Irving Babbitt, whose Rousseau and Romanticism condemns the movement specifically for its lack of a central ethic, cites Pygmalion as another Romantic symbol. Romantic Sehnsucht he calls "the pursuit of pure illusion".<sup>4</sup> Beddoes' own "Pygmalion" expresses this very sentiment in its symbolism; the sculptor's death not only fulfils this but provides the only possible solution to the dilemma. The arbitrariness of the Romantic ethic, which shifts every responsibility on to the inadequate individual, is further revealed, in Babbitt's opinion, by the Romantic version of irony. While this claims a descent from Socrates, it replaces the fixed reality at the centre of his Weltanschauung with one of its own, which is no reality at all.<sup>5</sup> However, Babbitt concedes, irony is perhaps a merciful alternative to madness. Though he obviously did not have Beddoes in mind when he wrote that, the sentiment is pertinent.

To those Romantics who sought it, there was in fact the more positive alternative of action in the external world, in the social context. The growing self-consciousness of the late eighteenth century which bore the germ of the Romantic movement and the whole modern dualism was accompanied by its natural correlative, the consciousness of other selves. Babbitt makes the point that the inner ethical anarchy manifests itself in a lust for power in the context of the external world,<sup>6</sup> or, in more sympathetic terms, the desire for a compensatory vindication within society may tend towards over-compensation, since its origins are literally selfish.



Fichte himself was in fact the originator of the type of nationalistic fervour which is usually traced back to Nietzsche, and that in a pejorative sense. Yet Fichte only reproduced a desire already present in the consciousness of the age.

The nature of the Romantic's activity when he turns to the outside world opens up a whole new region of ideas, but it will suffice here to recall the poet Byron, whose type of hero is seen by Mario Praz as the product of the sensibility of the age, and who died in a noble cause that had nothing to do with him. This is part of the desire for an identity in relation to the world, a desire for recognition which is not adequately fulfilled by the creation of literature, even if the literature is peopled with wish-fulfilling characters. Hence behind Isbrand stands Beddoes, who may wish to be an Isbrand, but who lacks his self-confident wholeness. And such is the dualism of Romantic thought that Beddoes had to create a Mario in the service of truth and betray Isbrand and his play. Beddoes himself ran true to type in his search for a political identity, but in the final analysis the external world failed him and he died. Since he preferred the politics of northern Europe, his was not the glorious death in battle of a Byron. His mind was more akin to the Gothic north than to the isles of Greece, yet the comparison is not valueless, for Beddoes presents as typical a case history of the Romantic malaise as Byron. Nor were these men typical of an age only: typical of the thinkers of an age, that is. They were the forerunners of the modern freedom riders and Russellite humanists, of the Orwells and Hemingways, precursors in the empiric search for truth and an approach to the problem of being human, a search perhaps not

always unmotivated by the less laudable impulses of the human ego.

Thus if we resume for the last time the particular case of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, all the Romantic symptoms will be seen to be present: the desire for artistic creation, the problem that must be solved empirically, and to which there can be no solution; the refuge in irony, both Romantic and the more general kind which is Beddoes' habitual mode of expression in his letters; the more lasting and satisfactory refuge in political activity; and ultimate compromise and disillusionment; the failure of ideals. Beddoes was a victim of his age and his own temperament; such was his nature and the nature of his personal problem that his own ego was insufficient to sustain him, as was the outside world. Within this alone, the broadest of contexts, Death's Jest Book, his work in general, and the apparently minor aspect of the German influence fall into a significant pattern. To narrow the context is to underestimate the subject.

The last word must be Donner's:

From beginning to end there rings through his work a longing for the eternal, a longing certainly also for love and companionship in the quest...of the kind... described by C.S.Lewis as friendship, a marching abreast in the common cause. Had it been otherwise there would have been no need for suicide. Beddoes's avocation, the cause he embraced with the whole ardour of his being, be it in poetry, medicine, science or politics, with such enthusiasm as estranged him from others often - his bitter cup - was the search for truth. Unable to find it in this world, either on the scientific or the human plane (and this was a harrowing experience, not seldom repeated) he sought what he saw as the well of truth, a domain

where "earthly passion" is no more, and sought it by himself, alone.... This, in my view, is the sum of all his writing.<sup>7</sup>

### Notes

- 1 Op.cit., p.166.
- 2 E.g., in the Songs of the Deaths, Mandrake's appearance etc. The grotesque changes of mood throw the emphasis back on mood itself.
- 3 Op.cit., p.126.
- 4 Op.cit., p.101.
- 5 Ibid., p.242f.
- 6 Ibid., p.343ff.
- 7 Echoes of Beddoesian Rambles, Studia Neophilologica, 1962, pp.263-4.

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